CONTENTS

Week 3: English Roots I

John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, Cato's Letters

Cato's Letters, vol. 1

John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon

source

NO. 14. SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 1721. The unhappy State of despotick Princes, compared with the happy Lot of such as rule by settled Laws. How the latter, by abusing their Trust, may forfeit their Crown. (Trenchard)

Sir,

The best, the wisest, and the most courageous of despotick princes, have frequently lamented the unhappy condition into which their greatness betrayed them. Being often born in purple, and educated in pride and luxury, they seldom can have any feeling of the calamities which the rest of the world suffer. They are, besides, surrounded, for the most part, by the falsest, the most ambitious, and the basest of all men; with such men's eyes they must therefore see, with such men's ears they must likewise hear.

I cannot, in truth, see how, in the nature of things, it can be otherwise: For the mean fawning, the servile flatteries, the deceitful correspondences, the base ingratitude to old benefactors, and the slavish compliances with new friends, and all the other arts and treacheries, which are necessary to be put in practice, in order to rise in such courts, or indeed to become heads of parties even in free governments, make it almost impossible for a truly great or virtuous man to attain to those stations.

A good man will choose to live in an innocent obscurity, and enjoy the internal satisfaction resulting from a just sense of his own merit, and virtue, rather than aim at greatness, by a long series of unworthy arts, and ignoble actions; whilst the ambitious, the cruel, the rapacious, the false, the proud, the treacherous part of mankind, will be ever thrusting themselves forward, and endeavouring to sparkle in courts, as well as in the eyes of the unthinking crowd; and, to make themselves necessary, will be continually either flattering or distressing princes.

Nor can it be expected that men, who have been raised to power by such execrable means, should ever use it to the benefit of mankind, or to any good end. They will always proceed in the same steps where they began; and use, for the support of their greatness, the same vile measures by which they acquired their greatness, till they have at length sacrificed all things in heaven and earth to their ambition.

There is a fine passage, to this purpose, in the short history of the Emperor Aurelian

by Vopiscus:
Et quaeritur quidem quae res malos principes faciat: Jam primum, licentia, deinde rerum copia, amici improbi, satellites detestandi, eunuchi avarissimi, aulici vel stulti et detestabiles, & (quod negari non potest) rerum publicarum ignorantia. Sed ego a patre meo audivi, Dioclesianum principem, jam privatum, dixisse, nihil esse difficilius quam bene imperare. Collegunt se quatuor vel quinque, atque unum consilium ad decipiendum principem capiunt: Dicunt quod probandum sit. Imperator, qui domi clausus est, vera non novit. Cogitur hoc tantum scire quod illi loquuntur: Facit judices quos fieri non oportet; amovet a republica quos debebat obtinere. Quid multa? Ut Dioclesianus ipse dicebat, bonus, cautus, optimus venditur imperator. Histor. August. Scriptor. Tom II. p. 531, 532.

"My friends," (says the great Emperor Dioclesian, to those who advised him to resume the empire)
you little know how difficult an undertaking it is to perform the duty of a Roman emperor, and to reign well. The few who have access to him, will cabal and conspire together, and unite in their counsels to deceive and betray him. They will study how to flatter him, and never tell him what it is their duty to tell him, and what is his interest to know; but only what they think will best please him. They will shut him up, and, as it were, imprison him in his palace; and no one shall be admitted to his ear, but by their leave, and in their presence. So that he shall never know the condition of his affairs, or be informed of the cries of his people, or, indeed, of any thing but what they think fit to tell him: By their means he shall prefer undeserving men to the best posts of the empire, and disgrace the most worthy of his subjects, and the most devoted to his interest. But why should I labour this point any more, when even the good, the most discerning, when the best and ablest emperors are bought and sold?

But Dioclesian was an arbitrary prince, whose will was a law to his subjects. But it is far otherwise in limited monarchies, where the prince governs his people by fixed rules and known statutes; and where his faithful States have a right to represent freely, though humbly, their grievances to him, and by his authority to call to account, and punish, such betrayers as are before described.

Happy therefore is that prince, happy in the love of his subjects, happy in the just applause and dutiful acknowledgment of millions of his fellow-creatures, who derive their felicity from him! Thrice happy is that people, where the constitution is so poised and tempered, and the administration so disposed and divided into proper channels,

that the passions and infirmities of the prince cannot enter into the measures of his government; where he has in his power all the means of doing good, and none of doing ill; where all beneficent and gracious actions are owned to flow from his clemency and goodness, and where inferior machines are answerable for all such conduct as may prejudice the publick.

Such a government does, in some sense, resemble that of heaven itself, where the sovereign disposer of all things can neither will nor do any thing but what is just and good: He is restrained, by the excellency of his own nature, from being the author of evil; and will call to a severe account all those, who would impute their own unrighteousness to his orders or influence.

Such is the monarchy of England, where the sovereign performs every act of his regal office by his authority, without the fatigue and anxiety of executing the troublesome parts of it in his person. The laws are chosen and recommended to him by his Parliament; and afterwards executed by his judges, and other ministers of justice: His great seal is kept by his chancellor: His naval power is under the direction of his high admiral: And all acts of state and discretion are presumed to be done by the advice of his council. All which officers are answerable for their misbehaviour, and for all actions done within their several provinces, which they have advised or could have prevented by giving their advice, or by making timely and humble remonstrances; which they are obliged to shew that they have done.

His leagues, his commands, and even his authentick speeches, are records. His high office consists in approving laws chosen by common consent; in executing those laws, and in being the publick guardian of the publick safety: And all private orders, which are inconsistent with these great duties, are not the orders of the crown; nor are the actions done in pursuance of them, the actions of the King, but the actions of those that do them. He can do no wrong himself, nor give authority to any one else to do wrong. Every act of his must be lawful, because all unlawful acts are not his. He can give no commands, as a man, which shall interfere with those which he gives as a King. His private will cannot control his publick will. He commands, as a King, his chancellor and judges, to act according to his known laws; and no private orders to do otherwise can be valid.

The nation has ever acted upon these maxims, and preserved such a dutiful respect to the royal Majesty, as never to suffer any guilt to be laid to him; but has always heaped

double vengeance upon such miscreants as would insinuate, that their crimes were approved or countenanced by their royal master.

Here is all the precaution which can be taken by human wisdom to make a happy prince and a happy people. The prince is restrained in nothing, but from doing mischief to his subjects, and consequently to himself; their true interest being ever the same: And the people can never have any motive to refuse just allegiance to their prince, whilst the ligaments of the constitution are preserved entire; that is, whilst parliaments are suffered to meet, and the courts of justice remain open, and such force is not used against them as dissolves all relation. All the subjects of such a prince highly honour, and almost worship, him. He has a vast revenue to support the splendo and magnificence of his court at home, and his royal dignity abroad: He has the power of disposing of all offices: All honours flow from him: His person is sacred, and not answerable for any events: He cannot be accountable for any wrong, which he is incapable of doing; and those who do it, shall be punished by his authority, even though it be supposed possible that they could, by false mis-representations, deceive him far enough to approve it.

The examples of Richard II who, as our histories tell us, was deposed by the States of his kingdom, and of the late King James, are no instances to disprove the truth of this assertion: For neither of them was deposed by his people before he first deposed himself. No champions for tyranny, or dogmatizers for unlimited dominion, have yet asserted, that a prince may not resign his crown by the consent of his people, when he declines to hold it any longer upon the conditions on which he first accepted it.

Suppose a prince, in any limited monarchy, should make a publick declaration to the States of his kingdom, that, Whereas the crown descended to him by the laws of that country, and that all the power which he was possessed of was conferred upon him by those laws; That he well knew that the preservation of those laws, which he had sworn to observe, and the general good of his people, were the sole considerations of his enjoying that high dignity; and yet, notwithstanding, he refused to hold it any longer, upon the terms upon which he had first accepted it, and sworn to observe; but that he now renounced that title, and would govern them hereafter by his sole will and pleasure: I say, if any should do this, the advocates for lawless power would do well to tell us, whether such a prince did not make as effectual a renunciation and resignation of his government, as if he disabled himself, and resigned it for his ease, or from the satiety of power. And if they allow that he may do all this by words spoken to express his intentions, I should be glad to know, from these men of distinctions, why he may not

do it by a series of actions, which will more effectually discover and declare his inward intentions, and may therefore be more depended on than any words can possibly be?

I call upon the two famous universities of this land for an answer: And, till I have a full one, shall continue to believe, that what was done, in regard to the abdication of the late King James, was just and necessary to be done upon the fundamental principles of government; and, that all his successors since have been rightful and lawful Kings and Queens of this realm; and I particularly glory to say, that no prince has ever better deserved that high title, than our present great and glorious sovereign, King George.
T. I am, &c.

NO. 15. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1721. Of Freedom of Speech: That the same is inseparable from publick Liberty. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as publick liberty, without freedom of speech: Which is the right of every man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the right of another; and this is the only check which it ought to suffer, the only bounds which it ought to know.

This sacred privilege is so essential to free government, that the security of property; and the freedom of speech, always go together; and in those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call any thing else his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of the nation, must begin by subduing the freedom of speech; a thing terrible to publick traitors.

This secret was so well known to the court of King Charles I that his wicked ministry procured a proclamation to forbid the people to talk of Parliaments, which those traitors had laid aside. To assert the undoubted right of the subject, and defend his Majesty's legal prerogative, was called disaffection, and punished as sedition. Nay, people were forbid to talk of religion in their families: For the priests had combined with the ministers to cook up tyranny, and suppress truth and the law. While the late King James, when Duke of York, went avowedly to mass; men were fined, imprisoned, and

undone, for saying that he was a papist: And, that King Charles II might live more securely a papist, there was an act of Parliament made, declaring it treason to say that he was one.

That men ought to speak well of their governors, is true, while their governors deserve to be well spoken of; but to do publick mischief, without hearing of it, is only the prerogative and felicity of tyranny: A free people will be shewing that they are so, by their freedom of speech.

The administration of government is nothing else, but the attendance of the trustees of the people upon the interest and affairs of the people. And as it is the part and business of the people, for whose sake alone all publick matters are, or ought to be, transacted, to see whether they be well or ill transacted; so it is the interest, and ought to be the ambition, of all honest magistrates, to have their deeds openly examined, and publickly scanned: Only the wicked governors of men dread what is said of them; Audivit Tiberius probra queis lacerabitur, atque perculsus est. The publick censure was true, else he had not felt it bitter.

Freedom of speech is ever the symptom, as well as the effect, of good government. In old Rome, all was left to the judgment and pleasure of the people; who examined the publick proceedings with such discretion, and censured those who administered them with such equity and mildness, that in the space of three hundred years, not five publick ministers suffered unjustly. Indeed, whenever the commons proceeded to violence, the great ones had been the aggressors.

Guilt only dreads liberty of speech, which drags it out of its lurking holes, and exposes its deformity and horror to day-light. Horatius, Valerius, Cincinnatus, and other virtuous and undesigning magistrates of the Roman commonwealth, had nothing to fear from liberty of speech. Their virtuous administration, the more it was examined, the more it brightened and gained by enquiry. When Valerius, in particular, was accused, upon some slight grounds, of affecting the diadem; he, who was the first minister of Rome, did not accuse the people for examining his conduct, but approved his innocence in a speech to them; he gave such satisfaction to them, and gained such popularity to himself, that they gave him a new name; inde cognomen factum Publicolae est; to denote that he was their favourite and their friend. Latae deinde leges. Ante omnes de provocatione, adversus magistratus ad populum, Livii lib. ii. cap. 8.

The best princes have ever encouraged and promoted freedom of speech; they knew

that upright measures would defend themselves, and that all upright men would defend them. Tacitus, speaking of the reigns of some of the princes above-mention'd, says with ecstasy, Rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae velis, & quae sentias dicere liceat: A blessed time, when you might think what you would, and speak what you thought!

The same was the opinion and practice of the wise and virtuous Timoleon, the deliverer of the great city of Syracuse from slavery. He being accused by Demoenetus, a popular orator, in a full assembly of the people, of several misdemeanors committed by him while he was general, gave no other answer, than that he was highly obliged to the gods for granting him a request that he had often made to them; namely, that he might live to see the Syracusians enjoy that liberty of speech which they now seemed to be masters of.

And that great commander, M. Marcellus, who won more battles than any Roman captain of his age, being accused by the Syracusians, while he was now a fourth time consul, of having done them indignities and hostile wrongs, contrary to the League, rose from his seat in the Senate, as soon as the charge against him was opened, and passing (as a private man) into the place where the accused were wont to make their defence, gave free liberty to the Syracusians to impeach him: Which, when they had done, he and they went out of the court together to attend the issue of the cause: Nor did he express the least ill-will or resentment towards these his accusers; but being acquitted, received their city into his protection. Had he been guilty, he would neither have shewn such temper nor courage.

I doubt not but old Spencer and his son, all honest men in England. They dreaded to be called traitors, because they were traitors. And I dare say, Queen Elizabeth's Walsingham, who deserved no reproaches, feared none. Misrepresentation of publick measures is easily overthrown, by representing publick measures truly: When they are honest, they ought to be publickly known, that they may be publickly commended; but if they be knavish or pernicious, they ought to be publickly exposed, in order to be publickly detested.

To assert, that King James was a papist and a tyrant, was only so far hurtful to him, as it was true of him; and if the Earl of Strafford had not deserved to be impeached, he need not have feared a bill of attainder. If our directors and their confederates be not such knaves as the world thinks them, let them prove to all the world, that the world thinks wrong, and that they are guilty of none of those villainies which all the world

lays to their charge. Others too, who would be thought to have no part of their guilt, must, before they are thought innocent, shew that they did all that was in their power to prevent that guilt, and to check their proceedings.

Freedom of speech is the great bulwark of liberty; they prosper and die together: And it is the terror of traitors and oppressors, and a barrier against them. It produces excellent writers, and encourages men of fine genius. Tacitus tells us, that the Roman commonwealth bred great and numerous authors, who writ with equal boldness and eloquence: But when it was enslaved, those great wits were no more. Postquam bellatum apud Actium; atque omnem potestatem ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere. Tyranny had usurped the place of equality, which is the soul of liberty, and destroyed publick courage. The minds of men, terrified by unjust power, degenerated into all the vileness and methods of servitude: Abject sycophancy and blind submission grew the only means of preferment, and indeed of safety; men durst not open their mouths, but to flatter.

Pliny the Younger observes, that this dread of tyranny had such effect, that the Senate the great Roman Senate, became at last stupid and dumb: Mutam ac sedentariam assentiendi necessitatem. Hence, says he, our spirit and genius are stupified, broken, and sunk for ever. And in one of his epistles, speaking of the works of his uncle, he makes an apology for eight of them, as not written with the same vigour which was to be found in the rest; for that these eight were written in the reign of Nero, when the spirit of writing was cramped by fear; Dubii sermonis octo scripset sub Nerone—cum omne studiorum genus paulo liberius & erectius periculosum servitus fecisset.

All ministers, therefore, who were oppressors, or intended to be oppressors, have been loud in their complaints against freedom of speech, and the licence of the press; and always restrained, or endeavoured to restrain, both. In consequence of this, they have brow-beaten writers, punished them violently, and against law, and burnt their works. By all which they shewed how much truth alarmed them, and how much they were at enmity with truth.

There is a famous instance of this in Tacitus: He tells us, that Cremutius Cordus, having in his Annals praised Brutus and Cassius, gave offence to Sejanus, first minister, and to some inferior sycophants in the court of Tiberius; who, conscious of their own characters, took the praise bestowed on every worthy Roman, to be so many reproaches pointed at themselves: They therefore complained of the book to the Senate which, being now only the machine of tyranny, condemned it to be burnt. But this did

not prevent its spreading. Libros cremandos censuere patres; sed manserunt occultati & editi: Being censured, it was the more sought after. “From hence,” says Tacitus, “we may wonder at the stupidity of those statesmen, who hope to extinguish, by the terror of their power, the memory of their actions; for quite otherwise, the punishment of good writers gains credit to their writings:” Nam contra, punitis ingeniis, gliscit auctoritas. Nor did ever any government, who practised impolitick severity, get any thing by it, but infamy to themselves, and renown to those who suffered under it. This also is an observation of Tacitus: Neque aliud [externi] reges, [aut] qui ea[dem] saevitiae usi sunt, nisi dedecus sibi, atque gloriam illis peperere.

Freedom of speech, therefore, being of such infinite importance to the preservation of liberty, every one who loves liberty ought to encourage freedom of speech. Hence it is that I, living in a country of liberty, and under the best prince upon earth, shall take this very favourable opportunity of serving mankind, by warning them of the hideous mischiefs thatthey will suffer, if ever corrupt and wicked men shall hereafter get possession of any state, and the power of betraying their master: And, in order to dothis, I will shew them by what steps they will probably proceed to accomplishtheir traitorous ends. This may be the subject of my next.

Valerius Maximus tells us, that Lentulus Marcellinus, the Roman consul, having complained, in a popular assembly, of the overgrown power of Pompey; the whole people answered him with a shout of approbation: Upon which the consul told them, “Shout on, gentlemen, shout on, and use those bold signs of liberty while you may; for I do not know how long they will be allowed you.”

God be thanked, we Englishmen have neither lost our liberties, nor are in danger of losing them. Let us always cherish this matchless blessing, almost peculiar to ourselves; that our posterity may, many ages hence, ascribe their freedom to our zeal. The defence of liberty is a noble, a heavenly office; which can only be performed where liberty is: For, as the same Valerius Maximus observes, Quid ergo libertas sine Catone? non magis quam Cato sine libertate.⚓✪
G. I am, &c.

NO. 17. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1721. What Measures are actually taken by wicked and desperate Ministers to ruin and

enslave their Country. (Trenchard)↩

Sir,

As under the best princes, and the best servants to princes alone, it is safe to speak what is true of the worst; so, according to my former promise to the publick, I shall take the advantage of our excellent King's most gentle government, and the virtuous administration of an uncorrupt ministry, to warn mankind against the mischiefs which may hereafter be dreaded from corrupt ones. It is too true, that every country in the world has sometimes groaned under that heavy misfortune, and our own as much as any; though I cannot allow it to be true, what Monsieur de Witt has long since observed, that the English court has always been the most thievish court in Europe.

Few men have been desperate enough to attack openly, and barefaced, the liberties of a free people. Such avowed conspirators can rarely succeed: The attempt would destroy itself. Even when the enterprize is begun and visible, the end must be hid, or denied. It is the business and policy of traitors, so to disguise their treason with plausible names, and so to recommend it with popular and bewitching colours, that they themselves shall be adored, while their work is detested, and yet carried on by those that detest it.

Thus one nation has been surrendered to another under the fair name of mutual alliance: The fortresses of a nation have been given up, or attempted to be given up, under the frugal notion of saving charges to a nation; and commonwealths have been trepanned into slavery, by troops raised or increased to defend them from slavery.

It may therefore be of service to the world, to shew what measures have been taken by corrupt ministers, in some of our neighbouring countries, to ruin and enslave the people over whom they presided; to shew by what steps and gradations of mischief nations have been undone, and consequently what methods may be hereafter taken to undo others: And this subject I rather choose, because my countrymen may be the more sensible of, and know how to value the inestimable blessing of living under the best prince, and the best established government in the universe, where we have none of these things to fear.

Such traitors will probably endeavour first to get their prince into their possession, and, like Sejanus, shut him up in a little island, or perhaps make him a prisoner in his

court; whilst, with full range, they devour his dominions, and plunder his subjects. When he is thus secluded from the access of his friends, and the knowledge of his affairs, he must be content with such misrepresentations as they shall find expedient to give him. False cases will be stated, to justify wicked counsel; wicked counsel will be given, to procure unjust orders. He will be made to mistake his foes for his friends, his friends for his foes; and to believe that his affairs are in the highest prosperity, when they are in the greatest distress; and that publick matters go on in the greatest harmony, when they are in the utmost confusion.

They will be ever contriving and forming wicked and dangerous projects, to make the people poor, and themselves rich; well knowing that dominion follows property; that where there are wealth and power, there will be always crowds of servile dependents; and that, on the contrary, poverty dejects the mind, fashions it to slavery, and renders it unequal to any generous undertaking, and incapable of opposing any bold usurpation. They will squander away the publick money in wanton presents to minions, and their creatures of pleasure or of burden, or in pensions to mercenary and worthless men and women, for vile ends and traitorous purposes.

They will engage their country in ridiculous, expensive, fantastical wars, to keep the minds of men in continual hurry and agitation, and under constant fears and alarms; and, by such means, deprive them both of leisure and inclination to look into publick miscarriages. Men, on the contrary, will, instead of such inspection, be disposed to fall into all measures offered, seemingly, for their defence, and will agree to every wild demand made by those who are betraying them.

When they have served their ends by such wars, or have other motives to make peace, they will have no view to the publick interest; but will often, to procure such peace, deliver up the strong-holds of their country, or its colonies for trade, to open enemies suspected friends, or dangerous neighbours, that they may not be interrupted in their domestick designs.

They will create parties in the commonwealth, or keep them up where they already are; and, by playing them by turns upon each other, will rule both. By making the Guelfs afraid of the Ghibelines, and these afraid of the Guelfs, they will make themselves the mediums and balance between the two factions; and both factions, in their turns, the props of their authority, and the instruments of their designs.

They will not suffer any men, who have once tasted of authority, though personally

their enemies, and whose posts they enjoy, to be called to an account for past crimes, though ever so enormous. They will make no such precedents for their own punishment; nor censure treason, which they intend to commit. On the contrary, they will form new conspiracies, and invent new fences for their own impunity and protection; and endeavour to engage such numbers in their guilt, as to set themselves above all fear of punishment.

They will prefer worthless and wicked men, and not suffer a man of knowledge or honesty to come near them, or enjoy a post under them. They will disgrace men of virtue, and ridicule virtue itself, and laugh at publick spirit. They will put men into employments, without any regard to the qualifications for those employments, or indeed to any qualifications at all, but as they contribute to their designs, and shew a stupid alacrity to do what they are bid. They must be either fools or beggars; either void of capacity to discover their intrigues, or of credit and inclination to disappoint them.

They will promote luxury, idleness, and expence, and a general depravation of manners, by their own example, as well as by connivance and publick encouragement. This will not only divert men's thoughts from examining their behaviour and politicks, but likewise let them loose from all the restraints of private and publick virtue. From immorality and excesses they will fall into necessity; and from thence into a servile dependence upon power.

In order to this, they will bring into fashion gaming, drunkenness, gluttony, and profuse and costly dress. They will debauch their country with foreign vices, and foreign instruments of vicious pleasures; and will contrive and encourage publick revels, nightly disguises, and debauched mummeries.

They will, by all practicable means of oppression, provoke the people to disaffection; and then make that disaffection an argument for new oppression, for not trusting them any further, and for keeping up troops; and, in fine, for depriving them of liberties and privileges, to which they are entitled by their birth, and the laws of their country.

If such measures should ever be taken in any free country, where the people choose deputies to represent them, then they will endeavour to bribe the electors in the choice of their representatives, and so to get a council of their own creatures; and where they cannot succeed with the electors, they will endeavour to corrupt the deputies after they are chosen, with the money given for the publick defence; and to

draw into the perpetration of their crimes those very men, from whom the betrayed people expect the redress of their grievances, and the punishment of those crimes. And when they have thus made the representatives of the people afraid of the people, and the people afraid of their representatives; then they will endeavour to persuade those deputies to seize the government to themselves, and not to trust their principals any longer with the power of resenting their treachery and ill-usage, and of sending honester and wiser men in their room.

But if the constitution should be so stubbornly framed, that it will still preserve itself and the people's liberties, in spite of all villainous contrivances to destroy both; then must the constitution itself be attacked and broken, because it will not bend. There must be an endeavour, under some pretence of publick good, to alter a balance of the government, and to get it into the sole power of their creatures, and of such who will have constantly an interest distinct from that of the body of the people.

But if all these schemes for the ruin of the publick, and their own impunity, should fail them; and the worthy patriots of a free country should prove obstinate in defence of their country, and resolve to call its betrayers to a strict account; there is then but one thing left for such traitors to do; namely, to veer about, and, by joining with the enemy of their prince and country, complete their treason.

I have somewhere read of a favourite and first minister to a neighbouring prince, long since dead, who played his part so well, that, though he had, by his evil counsels, raised a rebellion, and a contest for the crown; yet he preserved himself a resource, whoever got the better: If his old master succeeded, then this Achitophel, by the help of a baffled rebellion, ever favourable to princes, had the glory of fixing his master in absolute power: But, as his brave rival got the day, Achitophel had the merit of betraying his old master to plead; and was accordingly taken into favour.

Happy therefore, thrice happy, are we, who can be unconcerned spectators of the miseries which the greatest part of Europe is reduced to suffer, having lost their liberties by the intrigues and wickedness of those whom they trusted; whilst we continue in full enjoyment of ours, and can be in no danger of losing them, while we have so excellent a King, assisted and obeyed by so wise a Parliament.
T. I am, &c.

NO. 18. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1721. The terrible Tendency of publick Corruption to ruin a State, exemplified in that of Rome, and applied to our own. (Trenchard)↩️

Sir,

Venalis civitas mox peritura si emptorum invenias! “Mercenary city, ripe for destruction, and just ready to deliver up thyself, and all thy liberties, to the first bidder, who is able to buy thee!” said the great King Jugurtha, when he was leaving Rome. Rome the nurse of heroes, the mistress of nations, the glory of empires, and the source, the standard, and pattern of virtue and knowledge, and, indeed, of every thing which ever was praise-worthy and valuable amongst men, was soon after fallen, fallen ten thousand thousand fathoms deep in the abyss of corruption and impiety: No more of that publick spirit appeared, that rendered it amiable, as well as terrible, to the world: It had conquered by its virtue more than its arms: It had commanded a willing subjection from the numerous nations, who readily acknowledged its superior genius and natural right to empire, and afterwards their own condition to be graced by the dignity of such a mistress.

“But” (says the Abbot Vertot)
about this time another nation seemed to appear upon the stage: A general corruption soon spread itself through all degrees of the state: Justice was publickly sold in the tribunals: The voices of the people went to the highest bidder; and the consuls, having obtained that great post by intrigues, or by bribery, never now made war but to enrich themselves with the spoils of nations, and often to plunder those very provinces, which their duty bound them to protect and defend. The provinces were obliged to supply these prodigious expences: The generals possessed themselves of the revenues of the commonwealth; and the state was weakened in proportion as its members became powerful. It was sufficient colour for rifling the people, and laying new imposts, if they did but give those exactions a new name.

There arose on a sudden, and as it were by enchantment, magnificent palaces, whose walls, roofs, and ceilings were all gilded: It was not enough that their beds and tables were all of silver; that rich metal must also be carved and adorned with basso relievo's, performed by the most excellent artists. All the money of the state was in the hands of the great men, the publicans, and certain freed-men richer than their masters.

He says,
It would make a volume to represent the magnificence of their buildings, the richness of their habits, the jewels they wore, the prodigious number of slaves, freed-men, and clients, by which they were constantly attended, and especially the expence and profusion of their tables: They were not contented, if, in the midst of winter, the Falernian wine that was presented them was not strewed with roses; and cooled in vessels of gold in summer: Their side-boards groaned under the weight and load of plate, both silver and gold: They valued the feast only by the costliness of the dishes that were served up; pheasants must be fetched for them through all the dangers of the sea; and to complete their corruption, after the conquestof Asia, they began to introduce women-singers and dancers into their entertainments.

"What defenders of liberty," says he,
are here? What an omen of approaching slavery? None could be greater, than to see valour less regarded in a state than luxury? to see the poor officer languishing in the obscure honours of a legion, whilst the grandees concealed their cowardice, and dazzled the eyes of the publick, by the magnificence of their equipage, and the profusion of their expence.

But what did all this profusion and magnificence produce? Pleasure succeeded in the room of temperance, idleness took place of the love of business, and private regards extinguished that love of liberty, that zeal and warmth, which their ancestors had shewn for the interest of the publick; luxury and pride became fashionable; all ranks and orders of men tried to outvie one another in expense and pomp; and when, by so doing, they had spent their private patrimonies, they endeavoured to make reprisals upon the publick; and, having before sold every thing else, at last sold their country.

The publick treasure was squandered away, and divided amongst private men; and new demands made, and new taxes and burdens laid upon the people, to continue and support this extravagance. Such conduct in the great ones occasioned murmurings, universal discontent, and at last civil wars. The people threw themselves under different heads or leaders of parties, who all aspired to make themselves masters of the commonwealth, and of the publick liberty; and, during the struggle, Rome and all Italy was but one slaughter-house. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, fell sacrifices to the ambition of a few: Rivers of blood ran in the publick streets, and proscriptions and massacres were esteemed sport and pastime; till at length two thirds of the people

were destroyed, and the rest made slaves to the most wicked and contemptible wretchesof mankind.

Thus ended the greatest, the noblest state that ever adorned the worldly theatre, that ever the sun saw: It fell a victim to ambition and faction, to base and unworthy men, to parricides and traitors; and every other nation must run the same fortune, expect the same fatal catastrophe, who suffer themselves to be debauched with the same vices, and are actuated by the same principles and passions.

I wish I could say, that the Abbot Vertot's description of the Roman state, in its last declension, suited no other state in our own time. I hope that we ourselves have none of these corruptions and abuses to complain of: I am sure, if we have, that it is high time to reform them, and to prevent the dismal evils which they threaten. It is wild to think that there is any other way to prevent the consequence, without preventing the corruption, and the causes which produce it: Mankind will be always the same, will always act within one circle; and when we know what they did a thousand years ago in any circumstance, we shall know what they will do a thousand years hence in the same. This is what is called experience, the surest mistress and lesson of wisdom.

Let us therefore grow wise by the misfortunes of others: Let us make use of the Roman language, as a vehicle of good sense, and useful instruction; and not use it like pedants, priests, and pedagogues. Let their virtues and their vices, and the punishment of them too, be an example to us; and so prevent our miseries from being an example to other nations: Let us avoid the rocks upon which they have suffered shipwreck, and set up buoys and sea-marks to warn and guide posterity. In fine, let us examine and look narrowly into every part of our constitution, and see if any corruptions or abuses have crept or galloped into it. Let us search our wounds to the core, without which it is beyond the power of surgery to apply suitable remedies.

Our present misfortunes will rouse up our spirits, and, as it were, awaken us out of a deep lethargy. It is true, indeed, that they came upon us like a storm of thunder and lightning in a clear sky, and when the heavens seemed more serene; but the combustible matter was prepared before: Steams and exhalations had been long gathering from bogs and jakes; and though they some time seemed dispersed and far removed by the heat of a warm sun, yet the firmament was all the while impregnating with fire and brimstone; and now, on a sudden, the clouds thicken, and look black and big on every side, and threaten us with a hurricane.

Let us therefore act the part of skilful pilots, and call all hands to labour at the oars and at the ropes: Let us begin with throwing all our luggage and useless trumpery over-board; then let us lower or take down all superfluous sails, to prevent the boat from being overset; and when we have done all in our power to save the ship, let us implore the assistance of heaven; and I doubt not but we shall out-ride the storm.

Quid times? Caesarem vehis. We have King George on board, and at the helm; the favourite of heaven, and the darling of all good men; who not only gives us full leave, but encourages and assists us, to save ourselves: He will not, like some weak princes amongst his predecessors, screen guilty great men, suffer the faults of others to be laid at his door, nor permit his authority to be prostituted to patronize criminals; nor interpose and stand between his people's just resentment and the punishment of worthless favourites, of which sort of cattle he has none; so that it is our own fault if we are not happy, great, and free.

Indeed, we owe that justice and duty to our great benefactor, as not only fairly and impartially to represent to him our circumstances, and how we came into them; but to do all in our power to put our constitution on such a bottom, if any thing be wanting to it, that he may have the honour and pleasure of reigning over a free and happy people. This will be to make our gift complete, in presenting him with a crown, not beset with any difficulties; a glorious crown, and not to mock him with one of thorns.⚓✪

I shall soon, in some other letter, offer my thoughts from what sources these mischiefs have flowed upon us, and what methods I conceive are essentially necessary to retrieve them.
T. I am, &c.

NO. 24. SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1721. Of the natural Honesty of the People, and their reasonable Demands. How important it is to every Government to consult their Affections and Interest. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

I have observed, in a former letter, that the people, when they are not misled or cor-

rupted, generally make a sound judgment of things. They have natural qualifications equal to those of their superiors; and there is oftener found a great genius carrying a pitch-fork, than carrying a white staff. The poor cook preferred by the Grand Seignior to be his first vizier, in order to cure the publick disorder and confusion occasioned by the ignorance, corruption, and neglect of the former ministry, made good effectually his own promise, and did credit to his master's choice: He remedied the publick disorders, and proved, says Sir Paul Ricaut, an able and excellent minister of state.

Besides, there are not such mighty talents requisite for government, as some, who pretend to them without possessing them, would make us believe: Honest affections, and common qualifications, are sufficient; and the administration has been always best executed, and the publick liberty best preserved, near the origin and rise of states, when plain honesty and common sense alone governed the publick affairs, and the morals of men were not corrupted with riches and luxury, nor their understandings perverted by subtleties and distinctions. Great abilities have, for the most part, if not always, been employed to mislead the honest, but unwary, multitude, and to draw them out of the open and plain paths of publick virtue and public good.

The people have no bias to be knaves; the security of their persons and property is their highest aim. No ambition prompts them; they cannot come to be great lords, and to possess great titles, and therefore desire none. No aspiring or unsociable passions incite them; they have no rivals for place, no competitor to pull down; they have no darling child, pimp, or relation, to raise: they have no occasion for dissimulation or intrigue; they can serve no end by faction; they have no interest, but the general interest.

The same can rarely be said of great men, who, to gratify private passion, often bring down publick ruin; who, to fill their private purses with many thousands, frequently load the people with many millions; who oppress for a mistress, and, to save a favourite, destroy a nation; who too often make the publick sink and give way to their private fortune; and, for a private pleasure, create a general calamity. Besides, being educated in debauchery, and pampered in riot and luxury, they have no sense of the misfortunes of other men, nor tenderness for those who suffer them: They have no notion of miseries which they do not feel. There is a nation in Europe, which, within the space of an hundred years last past, has been blessed with patriots, who, void of every talent and inclination to do good, and even stinted in their ability for roguery, were forced to be beholden, for most of the mischief which they did, to the superior arts and abilities of humble rogues and brokers.

The first principles of power are in the people; and all the projects of men in power ought to refer to the people, to aim solely at their good, and end in it: And whoever will pretend to govern them without regarding them, will soon repent it. Such feats of errantry may do perhaps in Asia: but in countries where the people are free, it is madness to hope to rule them against their wills. They will know, that government is appointed for their sakes, and will be saucy enough to expect some regard and some good from their own delegates. Those nations who are governed in spite of themselves, and in a manner that bids defiance to their opinions, their interests, and their understandings, are either slaves, or will soon cease to be subjects.

Dominion that is not maintained by the sword, must be maintained by consent; and in this latter case, what security can any man at the head of affairs expect, but from pursuing the people's welfare, and seeking their good-will? The government of one for the sake of one, is tyranny; and so is the government of a few for the sake of themselves: But government executed for the good of all, and with the consent of all, is liberty; and the word government is profaned, and its meaning abused, when it signifies any thing else.

In free countries the people know all this. They have their five senses in as great perfection, as have those who would treat them as if they had none. They are not wont to hate their governors, till their governors deserve to be hated; and when this happens to be the case, not absolute power itself, nor the affections of a prince invested with it can protect or employ ministers detested by the people. Even the Grand Seignior, with all his boundless authority, is frequently forced to give up his first minister (who is sometimes his son-in-law, or brother-in-law) a sacrifice to appease the people's rage.

The people, rightly managed, are the best friends to princes; and, when injured and oppressed, the most formidable enemies. Princes, who have trusted to their armies or their nobility, have been often deceived and ruined; but princes, who have trusted wholly to the people, have seldom been deceived or deserted: The reason is, that in all governments, which are not violent and military, the people have more power than either the grandees or the soldiery; and their friendship is more sincere, as having nothing to desire but freedom from oppression. And whilst a prince is thus beloved by his people, it will rarely happen that any can be so rash and precipitate as to conspire against him; and such conspiracies have never the intended success: but, as Machiavel well observes, When the people are dissatisfied, and have taken a prejudice against their governors, there is no thing nor person that they ought not to fear.

It is therefore of vast importance to preserve the affections of the people even in those governments where they have no share in the administration. The wise states of Holland are so apprized of the truth of this maxim, that they have preserved themselves and their state by religiously observing it. Their government consists of many little aristocracies, where the magistrates choose each other, and the people have nothing to do; but in spirit and effect it is a democracy, and the dispositions and inclinations of the people have above all things the greatest weight in their counsels. The jealousy of the people makes a vigilant magistracy, who are honest out of fear of provoking them, and, by never doing it, are in great safety.

But, thanks be to heaven and our worthy ancestors, our liberties are better secured. We have a constitution, in which the people have a large share: They are one part of the legislature, and have the sole power of giving money; which includes in it every thing that they can ask for the publick good; and the representatives, being neither awed nor bribed, will always act for their country's interest; their own being so interwoven with the people's happiness, that they must stand and fall together.

But what if our delegates should not be suffered to meet; or, when met, should be so awed by force (as formerly in Denmark) or so corrupted by places and pensions (as in the reign of Charles II) as to be ready to give up publick liberty, and betray the interest of their principals to secure their own? This we may be sure can never happen under his Majesty's most just and gentle reign: However, it has happened formerly; and what has been, may be again in future reigns.

What, in such a case, is to be done? What remedies have our laws provided against so fatal a mischief? Must the people patiently crouch under the heaviest of all evils? Or has our constitution pointed out the means of redress? It would be absurd to suppose that it has not; and, in effect, the people have a legal remedy at hand: It is their undoubted right, and acknowledged to be so in the Bill of Rights passed in the reign of King Charles I and since, by the Act of Settlement of the crown at the Revolution; humbly to represent their publick grievances, and to petition for redress to those whose duty it is to right them, or to see them righted: And it is certain, that in all countries, the people's misfortunes are greater or less, in proportion as this right is encouraged or checked.

It is indeed the best and only just way that they can take to breathe their grievances; and whenever this way has been taken, especially when it has been universally taken, our kings have always accepted so powerful an application. Our parliaments too, who

are the keepers and barriers of our liberty, have shewn themselves ready and willing to receive the modest complaints and representations of their principals, and to apply quick remedies to the grievances contained in them. It has, indeed, been always thought highly imprudent, not to say dangerous, to resist the general groans and entreaties of the people, uttered in this manner.

This has been a method, which has always had great weight with good men, and has been always a great terror to bad. It has therefore always been encouraged or discouraged, according to the innocence or guilt or men in power. A prince, who minds the welfare and desires the affections of his subjects, cannot wish for a better expedient to know how his servants are approved, and how his government is liked, than by this way of countenancing his people in laying their hearts, their wishes, and their requests before him; and ministers never can be averse to such representations of the complaints of the people, unless they have given the people occasion to complain.

Titus and Trajan, conscious of their own virtuous administration, and worthy purposes, courted addresses and informations of this kind, from their subjects: They wisely knew, that if the Roman people had free leave to speak, they would not take leave to act; and that, whilst they could have redress, they would not seek revenge.

None but desperate parricides will make the people desperate.
G. I am, &c.

NO. 25. SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1721. Considerations on the destructive Spirit of arbitrary Power. With the Blessings of Liberty, and our own Constitution. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

The good of the governed being the sole end of government, they must be the greatest and best governors, who make their people great and happy; and they the worst, who make their people little, wicked, and miserable. Power in a free state, is a trust committed by all to one or a few, to watch for the security, and pursue the interest, of all: And, when that security is not sought, nor that interest obtained, we know what opinion the people will have of their governors.

It is the hard fate of the world, that there should be any difference in the views and interests of the governors and governed; and yet it is so in most countries. Men who have a trust frankly bestowed upon them by the people, too frequently betray that trust, become conspirators against their benefactors, and turn the sword upon those who gave it; insomuch that in the greatest part of the earth, people are happy if they can defend themselves against their defenders.

Let us look round this great world, and behold what an immense majority of the whole race of men crouch under the yoke of a few tyrants, naturally as low as the meanest of themselves, and, by being tyrants, worse than the worst; who, as Mr. Sidney observes, use their subjects like asses and mastiff dogs, to work and to fight, to be oppressed and killed for them. Even the good qualities and courage of such subjects are their misfortune, by strengthening the wicked hands of their brutal masters, and strengthening their own chains. Tyrants consider their people as their cattle, and use them worse, as they fear them more. Thus the most of mankind are become the wretched slaves of those, who are or should be their own creatures; they maintain their haughty masters like gods, and their haughty masters often use them like dogs: A fine specimen of gratitude and duty!

Yet this cruel spirit in tyrants is not always owing naturally to the men, since they are naturally like other men; but it is owing to the nature of the dominion which they exercise. Good laws make a good prince, if he has a good understanding; but the best men grow mischievous when they are set above laws. Claudius was a very harmless man, while he was a private man; but when he came to be a tyrant, he proved a bloody one, almost as bloody as his nephew and predecessor Caligula; who had also been a very good subject, but when he came to be the Roman emperor, grew the professed executioner of mankind.

There is something so wanton and monstrous in lawless power, that there scarce ever was a human spirit that could bear it; and the mind of man, which is weak and limited, ought never to be trusted with a power that is boundless. The state of tyranny is a state of war; and where it prevails, instead of an intercourse of confidence and affection, as between a lawful prince and his subjects, nothing is to be seen but jealousy, mistrust, fear, and hatred: An arbitrary prince and his slaves often destroy one another, to be safe: They are continually plotting against his life; he is continually shedding their blood, and plundering them of their property.
Cuncta ferit, dum cuncta timet.

I think it was Justinian, the Emperor, who said, “Though we are above the law, yet we live according to the law.” But, by his Majesty’s favour, there was more turn than truth in the saying; for princes that think themselves above law, act almost constantly against all law; of which truth Justinian himself is a known instance. Good princes never think themselves above it.

It is an affecting observation, that the power given for the protection of the world, should, in so many places, be turned to the destruction of it.
As if the law was in force for their destruction, and not for their preservation; that it should have power to kill, but not to protect, them: A thing no less horrid, than if the sun should burn us without lighting us, or the earth serve only to bury, and not feed and nourish us,

says Mr. Waller in a speech of his in Parliament.

Despotick power has defaced the Creation, and laid the world waste. In the finest countries in Asia, formerly full of people, you are now forced to travel by the compass: There are no roads, houses, nor inhabitants. The sun is left to scorch up the grass and fruits, which it had raised; or the rain to rot them: The gifts of God are left to perish; there being none of his creatures, neither man nor beast, left to use and consume them. The Grand Seignior, who (if we may believe some sanctified mouths, not addicted to lying) is the vicegerent of heaven, frustrates the bounty of heaven; and, being the father of his people, has almost butchered them all. Those few (comparatively very few) who have yet survived the miserable fate of their brethren, and are reserved for sacrifices to his cruelty, as occasion offers, and his lust prompts him, live the starving and wretched property of ravenous and bloody bashaws; whose duty to their master, as well as their own avarice, obliges them to keep the people, over whom they preside, poor and miserable.

But neither bashaws, nor armies, could keep that people in such abject slavery, if their priests and doctors had not made passive obedience a principle of their religion. The holy name of God is profaned, and his authority belied, to bind down wretchedness upon his creatures, and to secure the tyrant that does it. The most consummate of all wickedness, and the highest of all evils, are sanctified by the teachers of religion, and made by them a part of it. Yes, Turkish slavery is confirmed, and Turkish tyranny defended, by religion!

Sir Paul Ricaut tells us, that the Turks maintain, “That the Grand Seignior can never be

deposed, or made accountable for his crimes, whilst he destroys carelessly of his subjects under a hundred a day": 'Tis made martyrdom to die submissively by the hand of the tyrant; and some of his highest slaves have declared that they wanted only that honour to complete their felicity. They hold, that it is their duty to submit, though their tyrant "command a whole army of them to precipitate themselves from a rock, or to build a bridge with piles of their bodies for him to pass a river, or to kill one another to afford him pastime and pleasure."

Merciful God! Is this government! And do such governors govern by authority from thee!

It is scarce credible what Monsieur de L'Estoille tells us: He says he travelled in the Indies for above twenty days together, through lanes of people hanged upon trees, by command of the King; who had ordered above a hundred thousand of them to be thus murdered and gibbeted, only because two or three robberies had been committed amongst them. Bayle, Reponse aux Quest. d'un Provinc. tom. I. p. 595.

It is one of the great evils of servitude, that let the tyranny be ever so severe, 'tis always flattered; and the more severe 'tis, the more 'tis flattered. The oppressors of mankind are flattered beyond all others; because fear and servitude naturally produce as well as have recourse to, flattery, as the best means of self-preservation; whereas liberty, having no occasion for it, scorns it. Sir Paul Ricaut ascribes the decay of the Ottoman Empire to the force of flattery, and calls the Turkish court, a prison and banniard of slaves.

Old Muley, the Lord's anointed of Morocco, who it seems is still alive, is thought to have butchered forty thousand of his subjects with his own hands. Such a father is he of his people! And yet his right to shed human blood being a genuine characteristick of the church of Morocco, as by law established, people are greedy to die by his hand; which, they are taught to imagine, dispatches them forthwith to paradise: Insomuch that, though, as I am told, every time he mounts his horse, he slices off the head of the slave that holds his stirrup, to shew that he is as good an executioner as he is a horseman, yet there is a constant contention among his slaves, who shall be the happy martyr on that occasion; so that several of them crowding to his stirrup at once, for the gracious favour, his Majesty has sometimes the honour to cut off two heads, and to make two saints, with one blow.

The exercise of despotick power is the unrelenting war of an armed tyrant upon his

unarmed subjects: it is a war of one side, and in it there is neither peace nor truce. Tacitus describes it, Saeva jussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium: “Cruel and bloody orders, continual accusations, faithless friendships, and the destruction of innocents.” In another place he says, that
Italy was one continual shambles, and most of its fair cities were defaced or overthrown; Rome itself was in many places laid in ashes, with the greatest part of its magnificent buildings: virtue was despised, and barefaced debauchery prevailed. The solitary islands were filled with illustrious exiles, and the very rocks were stained with slaughters: but, in the city itself, cruelty raged still more; it was dangerous to be noble it was a crime to be rich, it was capital to have borne honours, and high treason to have refused them; and for virtue and merit, they brought sure and sudden destruction.

These were some of the ravages of absolute dominion! And as to the common people, the same author says, “They were debauched and dispirited, and given up to idleness and seeing shews.” Plebs sordida circo & theatris sueta.
Oh! abject state of such as tamely groan Under a blind dependency on one!

This is a sort of government, which is too great and heavy a curse for any one to wish, even upon those who are foolish enough, or wicked enough, to contend for its lawfulness; or, which is the same thing, for submission to it: But surely, if ever any man deserved to feel the merciless gripesof tyranny, it is he who is an advocate for it. Phalaris acted justly, when he hanselledhis brazen bull with the wretch who invented it.

As arbitrary power in a single person has made greater havock in human nature, and thinned mankind more, than all the beasts of prey and all the plagues and earthquakes that ever were; let those men consider what they have to answer for, who would countenance such a monstrous evil in the world, or would oppose those that would oppose it. A bear, a lion, or a tiger, may now and then pick up single men in a wood, or a desert; an earthquake sometimes may bury a thousand or two inhabitants in the ruins of a town; and the pestilence may once in many years carry off a much greater number: But a tyrant shall, out of a wanton personal passion, carry fire and sword through a whole continent, and deliver up a hundred thousand of his fellow creatures to the slaughter in one day, without any remorse or further notice, than that they died for his glory. I say nothing of the moral effect of tyranny; though ’tis certain that ignorance, vice, poverty, and vileness, always attend it.

He who compares the world now with what it was formerly, how populous once, how thin now; and considers the cause of this doleful alteration, will find just reason to fear, that spiritual and temporal tyranny, if they go on much longer, will utterly extinguish the human race. Of Turkey I have spoken already: The great continent of America is almost unpeopled, the Spaniards having destroyed, 'tis thought, about forty millions of its natives; and for some kingdoms in Europe, especially towards the north, I do not believe that they have now half the inhabitants that they had so lately as a hundred years ago.

Blessed be God, there are still some free countries in Europe, that abound with people and with plenty, and England is the foremost. This demonstrates the inestimable blessing of liberty. Can we ever over-rate it, or be too jealous of a treasure which includes in it almost all human felicities? Or can we encourage too much those that contend for it, and those that promote it? It is the parent of virtue, pleasure, plenty, and security; and 'tis innocent, as well as lovely. In all contentions between liberty and power, the latter has almost constantly been the aggressor. Liberty, if ever it produce any evils, does also cure them: Its worst effect, licentiousness, never does, and never can, continue long. Anarchy cannot be of much duration: and where 'tis so, it is the child and companion of tyranny; which is not government, but a dissolution of it, as tyrants are the enemies of mankind.

Power is like fire; it warms, scorches, or destroys, according as it is watched, provoked, or increased. It is as dangerous as useful. Its only rule is the good of the people; but because it is apt to break its bounds, in all good governments nothing, or as little as may be, ought to be left to chance, or the humours of men in authority: All should proceed by fixed and stated rules, and upon any emergency, new rules should be made. This is the constitution, and this the happiness of Englishmen; as hath been formerly shewn at large in these letters.

We have a constitution that abhors absolute power; we have a King that does not desire it; and we are a people that will never suffer it: No free people will ever submit to it, unless it steal upon them by treachery, or they be driven into it by violence. But a state can never be too secure against this terrible, this last of all human evils; which may be brought upon them by many causes, even by some that at first sight do not seem to threaten any such thing: And of all those causes, none seems more boding than a general distress, which certainly produces general discontent, the parent of revolutions; and in what such a circumstance of affairs may end, no man can ever foresee: Few are brought about without armies; a remedy almost always worse than

the disease. What is got by soldiers, must be maintained by soldiers; and we have, in this paper, already seen the frightful image of a military government; a government, which, at best, is violent and bloody, and eternally inconsistent with law and property.

It is therefore a dreadful wickedness to have any share in giving occasion for those discontents, which are so apt to burst into rage and confusion. A state sometimes recovers out of a convulsion, and gains new vigour by it; but it much oftener expires in it. Heaven preserve me from ever beholding contending armies in England! They are different things from what they once were. Our armies formerly were only a number of the people armed occasionally; and armies of the people are the only armies which are not formidable to the people. Hence it is, that, in the many revolutions occasioned by the strife between the two royal houses of York and Lancaster, there never was any danger of slavery from an armed force: A single battle decided the contention; and next day these popular soldiers went home, and resumed their ordinary arms, the tools of husbandry. But since that time armies have not been so easily parted with; but after the danger was over for which they were raised, have often been obstinately kept up, and by that means created dangers still as great.

Some quacks in politicks may perhaps venture publick disturbances, out of an opinion that they shall be able to prevent them by art, or suppress them by force. But this shews their capacity, as well as their wickedness: For, not to mention the malignity of their hearts, in risking publick ruin, to gratify a private appetite; how can any event be certainly foreseen, when the measure of the cause cannot be certainly known? They can never ascertain the degree of opposition; they cannot foreknow what circumstances may happen, nor into whose hands things may fall. Cicero did not dream, when he employed Octavius for the commonwealth, that his young champion for liberty would ever be the tyrant of his country. Who could foresee that Cromwell would enslave those whom he was employed to defend? But there is no trusting of liberty in the hands of men, who are obeyed by great armies.

From hence may be seen what a fatal and crying crime it would be, in any free country to break the confidence between the prince and his people. When loyalty is once turned into indifference, indifference will soon be turned into hatred; hatred will be returned with hatred; resentment may produce tyranny, and rage may produce rebellion. There is no mischief which this mutual mistrust and aversion may not bring forth. They must therefore be the blackest traitors, who are the first authors of so terrible an evil, as are they who would endeavour to protect them.

Henry III of Castile said, that he feared the curse of his people more than he did the arms of his enemies: In which saying he shewed as much wisdom as humanity; since, while he was beloved at home, he had nothing to fear from abroad, and the curses of his subjects were the likeliest means to bring upon him the arms of his enemies.⚓✪
G. I am, &c.

NO. 27. SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 1721. General Corruption, how ominous to the Publick, and how discouraging to every virtuous Man. With its fatal Progress whenever encouraged. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

Sallust, or whoever else was the author of the two discourses to Caesar about settling the commonwealth, observes to that emperor, that those magistrates judge wildly, who would derive their own security from the corruption of the people; and therefore make them wicked men, to make them good subjects: Whereas, says he, tis the interest of a virtuous prince to make his people virtuous; for, the debauched, having thrown off all restraint, are of all men the most ungovernable."

Pliny tells Trajan, that all his predecessors, except Nerva and one or two more, studied how to debauch their people, and how to banish all virtue, by introducing all vices; first, because they were delighted to see others like themselves; secondly, because the minds of the Romans being depraved by the taste and vices of slaves, they would bear with greater tameness the imperial yoke of servitude.

Thus did these governors and enemies of Rome destroy virtue, to set up power. Nor was such policy at all new or strange:

It was then, and always will be, the direct road to absolute monarchy, which is in its nature at everlasting enmity with all goodness and honesty. The Roman virtue and the Roman liberty expired together; tyranny and corruption came upon them almost hand in hand.

This shews the importance of an honest magistracy; nothing certainly is more threatening, or more to be apprehended, than a corrupt one. A knave in power is as much to

be dreaded, as a fool with a firebrand in a magazine of powder: You have scarce a bare chance for not being blown up.

From the wicked and worthless men, who engrossed all the places at Rome in the latter days of the commonwealth, and from the monstrous prodigalities, infamous briberies, and endless corruptions, promoted by these men, the sudden thraldom of that glorious city might easily have been foreseen. It was scarce possible to be honest, and preferred. Atticus would never accept of any employment, though he was offered the highest. "This refusal," says Monsieur Bayle,
was doubtless owing to his virtue: There was no rising to offices then, but by means that were infamous; nor was there any such thing as executing these offices according to the rules of justice and the publick good, without being exposed to the resentment and violence of many and great wicked men. He therefore chose to be rather a virtuous private man, than an exalted and publick rogue.

How charming is this example, but how rare! If all men were like Atticus, there would be no danger of a state of anarchy. But as to that we may be easy; for there will be always more rogues and rooks at hand to be devouring and monopolizing places, by all proper vile means, than there will be places to bestow.

Bayle goes on, and tells us of
a great traveller, who being rallied upon his rambling humour, answered, that he would cease travelling, as soon as ever he could find a country where power and credit were in the hands of honest men, and preferments went by merit. Nay then, says one who heard him, you will infallibly die travelling.

Corruption, bribery, and treachery, were such ways to power, as Atticus would not tread. Colonel Sidney says, that
a noble person in his time, who was a great enemy to bribery, was turned out from a considerable post, as a scandal to the court; for, said the principal minister, "he will make no profit of his place; and by that means cast a scandal upon those that do."

And Alexander ab Alexandro tells a story of a very honest man, well skilled in the languages, who having long struggled with difficulties and poverty, while he trusted in vain to his honesty and learning, bethought himself of a contrary road; and therefore turning pimp and pathick, instantly he prospered, and got great riches, power, and places.

Aude aliquid brevibus gyaris & carcere dignum.

Cicero, who lived to see dismal days of ambition and corruption at Rome, was sensible that he could do little or no good with all his abilities and his honesty. “If I saw,” says he in a letter to Lentulus,

if I saw the commonwealth held and governed by corrupt and desperate men, as has happened in my days and formerly, no motive or consideration should engage me in their interests; neither their bribes could move me, nor could dangers, which often sway the boldest men, terrify me; nor could any of their civilities, or any of their obligations, soften me.

Talking, in another place, of the Senate, then awed by power, or governed by avarice, he says, Aut assentiendum est nulla cum gravitate paucis aut frustra dissentiendum: That is, you must either basely vote with Crassus and Caesar, and one or two men more in power, or vote against them to no purpose. These great men did not seek power, nor use it, to do good to their country, which is the end of power; but to themselves, which is the abuse of power. Where government is degenerated into jobbing, it quickly runs into tyranny and dissolution: And he who in any country possesses himself of a great post for the sake of gainful jobs, as a certain great person once owned that he did, ought to finish his last job under a gallows.

It is natural and necessary for those that have corrupt ends, to make use of means that are corrupt, and to hate all men that are uncorrupt.

I would lay it down as a rule for all nations to consider and observe, that where bribery is practised, ‘tis a thousand to one but mischief is intended; and the more bribery, the more mischief. When therefore the people, or their trustees, are bribed, they would do well to consider, that it is not, it cannot be, for their own sakes. Honest and open designs, which will bear light and examination, are hurt and discredited by base and dark expedients to bring them about: But, if you would persuade a man to be a rogue, it is natural that money should be your first argument; and therefore, whoever offers me a bribe, does tacitly acknowledge that he thinks me a knave.

Tacitus, taking notice of the woeful decline of virtue and liberty, towards the end of the Republick, says, that the greatest villainies were committed with impunity, and ruin was the price of honesty: Deterrima quaequeimpune, ac multa honesta exitio fuere. And indeed, where corruption andpublick crimes are not carefully opposed, and severely punished, neither libertynor security can possibly subsist.

The immense briberies practised by Julius Caesar, were sure and terrible presages of Caesar's tyranny. It is amazing what mighty sums he gave away: Caius Curio alone, one of the tribunes, was bought into his interest, at no smaller a price than half a million of our money. Other magistrates too had their shares; and all were bribed, who would be bribed. We may easily conceive how he came by such sums; he got them as wickedly as he gave them away. Nor can I call him generous in this vast liberality; since he purchased the Roman empire with its own money, and gave away a part to get the whole.

Unjust and unfrugal ways of throwing away money, make wicked and violent means necessary to get money; and rapine naturally follows prodigality. They that waste publick money, seldom stop there, but go a wicked step farther; and having first drained the people, at last oppress them. Publick frauds are therefore very alarming, as they are very big with publick ruin. What shall we say then of other times, when publick schemes have been concerted to confound all property, to put common honesty out of countenance, and banish it from amongst men; and when an appetite for power was only an appetite for mischief? Dreadful sure was the prospect! And yet this was the state of Rome in those days; as will be seen further before this letter is ended.

Nor would it have been any advantage or security to Rome, though Caesar and his party had been less able men than in truth they were: Having debauched the people, he did more by corruption towards enslaving them, than he did byhis parts, as great as they were. It is somewhere observed, that to do good requires some parts and pains; but any man may be a rogue. The world, says the proverb, little knows what silly fellows govern it. Even the difficulties of doing good proceed from the pravity of some men's nature, ever prone to do evil; and so strong is that pravity, that many men frequently slight great temptations tobe honest, and embrace slight temptations to be knaves.

It is an observation, which every body is capable of making, that a good character lost is hardly, if ever, recovered. Now the reason of this is, not so much from the malevolence of the world (often too ready to calumniate) as from the inability of a knave to become honest: He is, as it were, doomed to be one: The bias of his spirit is crooked; and if ever he act honestly, it is for a roguish reason. I have known a man, who, having wilfully lost all credit, rejected as wilfully all opportunities to regain it, even when thrown into his lap. He could not help earning fresh detestation, with great labour; when he might have acquired the highest renown with the greatest ease. From hence may be seen how dangerous it is ever to trust a man who has once been a knave; and hence too may be learned, that from men who have done eminent mischief, whether

publick or private, greater still is to be dreaded. Vice is a prolifick thing, and wickedness naturally begets wickedness.

Olearius, giving an account of Muscovy, observes, that
the Great Duke's court hath this in common with those of other princes, that vice takes place of virtue, and gets nearest the throne. Those who have the honour to be nearest his person, are withal more subtle, more deceitful, and more insolent, than the others that have not. They know very well how to make their advantages of the prince's favour, and look for the greatest respects and humblest submissions imaginable, from those who make their addresses to them; which the others render them, as much to avoid the mischief they might do to them, as for the good they expect from them.

This is the character of a court, where one is not much surprized nor troubledto find out tyranny and corruption in abundance: But one is at once amazed and affected with the mournful account Sallust gives us of the Romans in his time;the Romans, who had been so virtuous a people, so great and so free!

The same author says, that it would have lessened his concern, had he seen such great wickedness perpetrated by men of great qualities. But his grief had not this mitigation For, says he, wretched creatures with little souls, whose whole genius lay in their tongue and whose utmost talent and ability was to prate glibly, exercised with insolence that power which they had acquired by chance, or by the sloth of others. Ac me quidem mediocris dolor angerct, si virtute partam victoriam more suo per servitium exercerent: Sed homines inertissimi quorum omnis vis virtusque in lingua sita est, forte, & alterius socordia, dominationem oblatam insolentes agitant. And for the Roman nobility of that time, he says, that, like stupid statues, their names and titles were their only ornament: Inertissimi nobiles, in quibus, sicut in statua praeter nomen nibil est additamenti. Sallust. ad C. Caesarem, de repub. ordinand.⚓✪

We see what a market these men made of power, and what a degree of degeneracy they introduced. The end of all was, the utter loss of liberty, and a settled tyranny.
G. I am, &c.

NO. 33. SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1721. Cautions against the natural Encroachments of Power. (Gordon)↩️

Sir,

Considering what sort of a creature man is, it is scarce possible to put him under too many restraints, when he is possessed of great power: He may possibly use it well; but they act most prudently, who, supposing that he would use it ill, inclose him within certain bounds, and make it terrible to him to exceed them.

Men that are above all fear, soon grow above all shame. Rupto pudore & metu, suo tantum ingenio utebatur, says Tacitus of Tiberius. Even Nero had lived a great while inoffensively, and reigned virtuously: But finding at last that he might do what he would, he let loose his appetite for blood, and committed such mighty, such monstrous, such unnatural slaughters and outrages, as none but a heart bent on the study of cruelty could have devised. The good counsels of Seneca and Burrhus were, for some time, checks upon his wolfish nature; and doubtless he apprehended, that if he made direct and downright war upon his people, they would use resistance and make reprisals: But discovering, by degrees, that they would bear any thing, and his soldiers would execute every thing, he grew into an open defiance with mankind, and daily and wantonly wallowed in their blood. Having no other rival, he seemed to rival himself, and every day's wickedness was blacker than another.

Yet Nero was not the worst of all men: There have been thousands as bad as he, and only wanted the same opportunity to shew it. And there actually have been many princes in the world who have shed more blood, and done more mischief to mankind, than Nero did. I could instance in a late one, who destroyed more lives than ever Nero destroyed, perhaps an hundred to one. It makes no difference, that Nero committed butcheries out of cruelty, and the other only for his glory: However the world may be deceived by the change of names into an abhorrence of the one, and an admiration of the other; it is all one to a nation, when they are to be slaughtered, whether they be slaughtered by the hangman or by dragoons, in prison or in the field; nor is ambition better than cruelty, when it begets mischief as great.

It is nothing strange, that men, who think themselves unaccountable, should act unaccountably, and that all men would be unaccountable if they could: Even those who have done nothing to displease, do not know but some time or other they may; and no man cares to be at the entire mercy of another. Hence it is, that if every man had his will, all men would exercise dominion, and no man would suffer it. It is therefore owing more to the necessities of men, than to their inclinations, that they have put themselves under the restraint of laws, and appointed certain persons, called magistrates,

to execute them; otherwise they would never be executed, scarce any man having such a degree of virtue as willingly to execute the laws upon himself; but, on the contrary, most men thinking them a grievance, when they come to meddle with themselves and their property. Suarum legum auctor & eversor, was the character of Pompey: He made laws when they suited his occasions, and broke them when they thwarted his will. And it is the character of almost every man possessed of Pompey's power: They intend them for a security to themselves, and for a terror to others. This shews the distrust that men have of men; and this made a great philosopher call the state of nature, a state of war; which definition is true in a restrained sense, since human societies and human laws are the effect of necessity and experience: Whereas were all men left to the boundless liberty which they claim from nature, every man would be interfering and quarrelling with another; every man would be plundering the acquisitions of another; the labour of one man would be the property of another; weakness would be the prey of force; and one man's industry would be the cause of another man's idleness.

Hence grew the necessity of government; which was the mutual contract of a number of men, agreeing upon certain terms of union and society, and putting themselves under penalties, if they violated these terms, which were called laws, and put into the hands of one or more men to execute. And thus men quitted part of their natural liberty to acquire civil security. But frequently the remedy proved worse than the disease; and human society had often noenemies so great as their own magistrates; who, where-ever they were trusted with too much power, always abused it, and grew mischievous to those who made them what they were. Rome, while she was free (that is, while she kept her magistrates within due bounds) could defend herself against all the world, and conquer it: But being enslaved (that is, her magistrates having broke their bounds) she could not defend herself against her own single tyrants, nor could they defend her against her foreign foes and invaders; for by their madness and cruelties they had destroyed her virtue and spirit, and exhausted her strength. This shews that those magistrates that are at absolute defiance with a nation, either cannot subsist long, or will not suffer the nation to subsist long; and that mighty traitors, rather than fall themselves, will pull down their country.

What a dreadful spirit must that man possess, who can put a private appetite in balance against the universal good of his country, and of mankind! Alexander and Caesar were that sort of men; they would set the world on fire, and spill its blood, rather than not govern it. Caligula knew that he was hated, and deserved to be hated; but it did

not mend him. Oderint dum metuant, was his by-word: All that the monster aimed at, was to be great and terrible. Most of these tyrants died as became them; and, as they had reigned, by violence: But that did not mend their successors, who generally earned the fate of those that went before them, before they were warm in their place. Invenit etiam aemulos infelix nequitia: Quid si floreat vigeatque? "If unfortunate villainy thus finds rivals, what shall we say, when it exalts its head and prospers?"

There is no evil under the sun but what is to be dreaded from men, who may do what they please with impunity: They seldom or never stop at certain degrees of mischief when they have power to go farther; but hurry on from wickedness to wickedness, as far and as fast as human malice can prompt human power. Ubi semel recto deerratum est, in praeceps pervenitur—a rectis in vitia, a vitiis in prava, a pravis in praecipitia, says a Roman historian; who in this speaks the truth, though in other instances he tells many lies; I mean that base flatterer of power, Velleius Paterculus. So that when we see any great mischief committed with safety, we may justly apprehend mischiefs still greater.

The world is governed by men, and men by their passions; which, being boundless and insatiable, are always terrible when they are not controuled. Who was ever satiated with riches, or surfeited with power, or tired with honours? There is a tradition concerning Alexander, that having penetrated to the Eastern Ocean, and ravaged as much of this world as he knew, he wept that there was never another world for him to conquer. This, whether true or no, shews the spirit of the man, and indeed of human nature, whose appetites are infinite.

People are ruined by their ignorance of human nature; which ignorance leads them to credulity, and too great a confidence in particular men. They fondly imagine that he, who, possessing a great deal by their favour, owes them great gratitude, and all good offices, will therefore return their kindness: But, alas! how often are they mistaken in their favourites and trustees; who, the more they have given them, are often the more incited to take all, and to return destruction for generous usage. The common people generally think that great men have great minds, and scorn base actions; which judgment is so false, that the basest and worst of all actions have been done by great men: Perhaps they have not picked private pockets, but they have done worse; they have often disturbed, deceived, and pillaged the world: And he who is capable of the highest mischief, is capable of the meanest: He who plunders a country of a million of money, would in suitable circumstances steal a silver spoon; and a conqueror, who steals and

pillages a kingdom, would, in an humbler fortune, rifle a portmanteau, or rob an orchard.

Political jealousy, therefore, in the people, is a necessary and laudable passion. But in a chief magistrate, a jealousy of his people is not so justifiable, their ambition being only to preserve themselves; whereas it is natural for power to be striving to enlarge itself, and to be encroaching upon those that have none. The most laudable jealousy of a magistrate is to be jealous for his people; which will shew that he loves them, and has used them well: But to be jealous of them, would denote that he has evil designs against them, and has used them ill. The people's jealousy tends to preserve liberty; and the prince's to destroy it. Venice is a glorious instance of the former, and so is England; and all nations who have lost their liberty, are melancholy proofs of the latter.

Power is naturally active, vigilant, and distrustful; which qualities in it push it upon all means and expedients to fortify itself, and upon destroying all opposition, and even all seeds of opposition, and make it restless as long as any thing stands in its way. It would do what it pleases, and have no check. Now, because liberty chastises and shortens power, therefore power would extinguish liberty; and consequently liberty has too much cause to be exceeding jealous, and always upon her defence. Power has many advantages over her; it has generally numerous guards, many creatures, and much treasure; besides, it has more craft and experience, less honesty and innocence: And whereas power can, and for the most part does, subsist where liberty is not, liberty cannot subsist without power; so that she has, as it were, the enemy always at her gates.

Some have said, that magistrates being accountable to none but God, ought to know no other restraint. But this reasoning is as frivolous as it is wicked; for no good man cares how many punishments and penalties lie in his way to an offence which he does not intend to commit: A man who does not mean to commit murder, is not sorry that murder is punished with death. And as to wicked men, their being accountable to God whom they do not fear, is no security to use against their folly and malice; and to say that we ought to have no security against them, is to insult common sense, and give the lie to the first law of nature, that of self-preservation. Human reason says, that there is no obedience, no regard due to those rulers, who govern by no rule but their lust. Such men are no rulers; they are outlaws; who, being at defiance with God and man, are protected by no law of God, or of reason. By what precept, moral or divine, are we forbid to kill a wolf, or burn an infected ship? Is it unlawful to prevent wicked-

ness and misery, and to resist the authors of them? Are crimes sanctified by their greatness? And is he who robs a country, and murders ten thousand, less a criminal, then he who steals single guineas, and takes away single lives? Is there any sin in preventing, and restraining, or resisting the greatest sin that can be committed, that of oppressing and destroying mankind by wholesale? Sure there never were such open, such shameless, such selfish impostors, as the advocates for lawless power! It is a damnable sin to oppress them; yet it is a damnable sin to oppose them when they oppress, or gain by oppression of others! When they are hurt themselves ever so little, or but think themselves hurt, they are the loudest of all men in their complaints, and the most outrageous in their behaviour: But when others are plundered, oppressed, and butchered, complaints are sedition; and to seek redress, is damnation. Is not this to be the authors of all wickedness and falsehood?

To conclude: Power, without control, appertains to God alone; and no man ought to be trusted with what no man is equal to. In truth there are so many passions, and inconsistencies, and so much selfishness, belonging to human nature, that we can scarce be too much upon our guard against each other. The only security which we can have that men will be honest, is to make it their interest to be honest; and the best defence which we can have against their being knaves, is to make it terrible to them to be knaves. As there are many men wicked in some stations, who would be innocent in others; the best way is to make wickedness unsafe in any station.
I am, &c.,

P. S. This letter is the sequel of that upon human nature; and both are intended for an introduction to a paper which I intend to write upon the restraints which all wise nations put upon their magistrates.⚓✪
G

John Trenchard, *Cato's Letters*, *vol. 2*

June 24, 1721 to March 3, 1722 [1724]

source

NO. 36. SATURDAY, JULY 8, 1721. Of Loyalty. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

Loyalty is a very good word; but, like most others, being wrested first by design, and afterwards by ignorance and custom, from its original and virtuous signification, does now frequently bear a very bad one. In an honest sense, indeed in common sense, it means no more than the squaring our actions by the rules of good laws, and an attachment to a constitution supported by such: And the French word loyauté, comes from another French word, which signifies law.

Other meanings have since been fathered upon that word, such as it abhors. To bear stupidly the wild or deliberate ill acts of a tyrant, overturning all law, and to assist him in it, has been impiously called loyalty; though it was all the while on the other side: As it is the very office and genius of loyalty to defend law, virtue, and property; and to pull down, as traitors and disloyalists, all who assault them.

Whoever is lawless, is disloyal; and to boast of loyalty to disloyalty, is strange nonsense; a paradox first invented by solemn and pernicious pedants, whose trade it is to pervert the use of words and the meaning of things, to abuse and confound the human understanding, and to mislead the world into misery and darkness.

To obey a prince, who does himself obey the laws, is confessed on all hands to be loyalty: Now, from hence, one would naturally think, that, by every rule of reason, it might be inferred, that to obey one who obeys no law, is a departure from all loyalty, and an outrage committed upon it; and that both he who commands, and he who obeys, are outlaws and disloyalists: And yet these same ungodly pedants shall maintain it to your face, that though loyalty consist in obeying a good prince, it also consists in the very contrary, and in obeying a wicked prince; who, though he be an enemy to God, is the vicegerent of God; and though he commit all wickedness, yet does it by divine right; and though it be a sin to obey him, yet it is a damnable sin to resist him: In short, that all the instruments and partners of his crying crimes are loyalists; and all who defend law, virtue, and mankind, against such monsters, are rebels, and assuredly damned, for

preventing or resisting actions which deserve damnation: And thus men become rebels, by acting virtuously against the worst of all rebels, who are restrained by no consideration, human or divine.

Was ever such impudence, impiety, and nonsense, broached amongst pagans? In truth they never would have been broached amongst Christians, had not sanctity been made a cloak for those who sold godliness for gain, and propagated imposture at the price of all that was virtuous and sacred.

Disloyalty is indeed rarely the crime of subjects and private men; and they who charge it most upon others, are they who practice it most themselves. King Richard II and Edward II were the greatest rebels in England in their own time: The greatest rebel in all Italy, is the Pope. Every lawless prince is a rebel, and the Grand Seignior is the greatest that is or can be in his own dominions. It is true, he is bound by no written law; but in this very thing he is a rebel: No man ought to be exempt from the ties of laws; and the higher any man is, the more ties he ought to be under. All power ought to be balanced with equal restraints, else it will certainly grow mischievous: He who knows no law, but his own lust, seldom observes any other. Besides, there are such things as the external laws of mercy, justice, and truth, legible by every man's natural reason, when it is not blinded by craft; and whoever observes not these, let him be called by what name he will, is a rebel to all the world, and it is loyalty to all the world to pursue him to destruction.

Brutus, who expelled the royal and rebellious race of the Tarquins, was the most loyal man in Rome; and his sons, who would have restored them, were the greatest rebels in Rome: The Roman people therefore acted justly, when they rewarded the father with the chief magistracy; and the father acted justly, when he sacrificed the traitors of his own loins to the liberties and resentments of the Roman people.

Some play with the words sovereign and subject, and divert themselves with the ridicule of obedience resisting command: But their wit and reasoning are alike wretched, whether they proceed from ignorance or dishonesty, as they often do from both; as if the world were to be guided by sound rather than sense, in things essential to its well-being. The highest and first sovereignty is in the laws, of which the prince has only the sovereign execution: In other words, it is his office and duty to see the laws obeyed; an employment which implies their superiority, and his own subjection.

A learned prince, who knew not much of government, and practised less than he knew

did yet own, that a King is only the chief servant of the state. The law ought to be the measure of his power and actions, as much as of any private man's, and more; as his example is of greater influence, and as his opportunities and temptations to break them are greater than any private man's can be: And the only just reason that can be assigned why those crimes which are punished with death in a subject, have been often committed with impunity by a chief magistrate, was, because the station which he was in gave him such strength, and such a party, that to have punished him, the publick quiet must have been risked or shaken: And as to the inferior great traitors, the gain of their crimes and partners of their guilt protected them.

Exalted wickedness is the safest: I could name an English reign, in which, for above twenty years together, there scarce passed a week in which the prince did not venture his crown, and his ministers forfeit their heads. And yet not one of these forfeitures were exacted: So corrupt and wicked was the government, and so tame and acquiescing were the people! Indeed the people in every country deserve the best usage, and in almost all meet with the worst: Their lot is very hard and unequal: They often pay millions, not only in their own wrong, but frequently to strengthen the hands of their oppressors: And this they generally do, without so much as a tumult; yet for one of them to coin a silver sixpence, is death and confiscation.

These things are obvious; yet how little are they considered! It is safer for a great man to rob a country, than for a poor man to steal a loaf: But the wages of villainy protect villains, and justice is only blind where the object is naked. But these are only complaints, which, we hope, we Britons will never have cause to make.

We have been formerly stunned with the big word prerogative, by those who contend for unlimited loyalty: Men, who while they reserve to themselves a right to be the most turbulent of all subjects, would make all others the tamest and the blindest of all slaves. But what prerogative do they mean? I know no prerogative in the crown, which is not at the same time a certain privilege of the people, for their sake granted, and for their sake to be exerted: And where a prerogative is claimed in opposition to the rights and interests of the people, so far a tyranny is claimed; tyranny being nothing else but the government of one man, or of a few men, over many, against their inclination and interest: And where prerogative is exercised more to the hurt than the good of the governed, it is no longer prerogative, but violence and usurpation; and therefore in England several prerogatives have from time to time been taken from the crown, because the crown had abused them.

A certain British king was wont to say, that so long as he could make bishops and judges, he would have what law and gospel he pleased. An impious and arbitrary saying, and a bold one coming from a prince of so mean a spirit, governing a brave and a free people, who were disgraced by his profuse and ridiculous reign, which is one of those that stain our annals. But for all the absurdity of his government, and the smallness of his soul, he found himself able, by the assistance of sycophants, to multiply and entail many evils upon these kingdoms. It is certain, that he and some of his posterity found such complaisant bishops and judges, that the religion and politicks of the court were generally the religion and politicks of Westminster-Hall, and of Henry VII's chapel: Absolute power in the crown was pleaded and granted in both those solemn places.

So wicked and merciless a thing is self-interest! Those grave men, who were by profession the guardians of truth and law, gave up both, to keep preferment, or to acquire it. How little are men to be trusted, and how little does religion bind them! They can break the strongest bands, violate the most awful oaths, and commit the most horrid, most extensive treacheries, for the vilest and most uncertain gratifications. I am therefore seldom surprized to hear of the most astonishing things and events, whether they be publick depredations and massacres, or private treacheries and parricides; having my mind constantly filled with examples that answer them, or exceed them, though perhaps they are not exactly of the same nature.

It is certain, that those judges, counsellors, and clergy, who have adjudged a dispensing and lawless power to kings, had, each of them, the guilt of a thousand private murtherers upon their head: They, as it were, signed a dead-warrant for their country; and, as much as in them lay, made themselves the authors of universal barbarity, slavery, infamy, and wretchedness; and of every other evil and wickedness, which is produced by that great source of all evil and wickedness, arbitrary power.

Of this we are sure, that the least publick guilt is greater than the greatest private guilt: Let every man concerned in publick trust, every where, consider this, and examine his own heart: Every step which a publick man takes, every speech which he makes, and every vote which he gives, may affect millions. Whoever acts in a great station against his conscience, might perhaps with more innocence carry a dagger, and like Old Muley stab twenty men a day.

Now were these judges and counsellors above-mentioned, loyalists? Yes, doubtless, if there are such things as loyal traitors. For, even supposing loyalty centered wholly in

the person of the prince, than which nothing can be more false; yet even here it loses its name, since it is doing him the highest unkindness, as it separates him from his people, and their hearts from him, and as it tempts him to evil, loads him with infamy and guilt, and lessens his security; in truth, such loyalty is perfidiousness and flattery, and has cost many princes their lives and their kingdoms.

No good prince will pretend that there is any loyalty due to him further than he himself is loyal to the law, and observant of his people, the makers of kings and of laws. If any man, misled by sound and delusion doubt this, let him consider what is the design of magistracy, and what the duty of magistrates; and if he has reason in him, he will find that his duty is only due to those who perform theirs; that protection and allegiance are reciprocal; that every man has a right to defend what no man has a right to take: That the divine right of kings, if they had it, can only warrant them in doing actions that are divine, and cannot protect them in cruelty, depredation, and oppression That a divine right to act wickedly, is a contradiction and blasphemy, as it is maledictio supremi numinis, a reproach upon the Deity, as if he gave any man a commission to be a devil: That a King, in comparison with the universe, is not so much as a mayor of a town, in comparison with a kingdom; and that were Mr. Mayor called King, it would give him no new right; or, if a King were only called Mr. Mayor, it would not lessen nor abrogate his old jurisdiction: That they are both civil officers; and that an offence in the lesser is more pardonable than an offence in the greater: That the doctrines of unbroken hereditary right, and of blind obedience, are the flights and forgeries of flatterers, who belie heaven, and abuse men, to make their own court to power, and that not one of them will stand the trial himself: In fine, the government, honest and legal government, is imperium legum non hominum, the authority of law, and not of lust.

These are the principles upon which our government stands, the principles upon which every free government must stand; and that we Britons dare tell such truths, and publish such principles, is a glorious proof of our civil and religious freedom: They are truths which every Briton ought to know, even children and servants: They are eternal truths, that will remain for ever, though in too many countries they are dangerous, or useless, or little known: They are truths, to which we are beholden for the present succession, and the present mild administration; and they are the principles o English loyalty, as well as of English liberty.

Before I have done, I would take notice of another mistake very common concerning loyalty: It is indeed a trick, more than a mistake; I mean of those who would assert or

rather create a sort of loyalty to ministers, and make every thing which they do not like an offence against their master.

How endless are the arts and instances of deceiving! Yet the stalest artifices are still new. The above is a method which bad ministers have ever taken, but which good ones want not: Innocent ministers will never prostitute the name and authority of the prince, to protect their own faults and mistakes; and every wise and indifferent man will be for preserving him from the imputation of the guilt and folly of his servants, who, whenever they are for thrusting in their master between themselves and the censure or odium of their own actions, do at once acknowledge that their own actions are evil, and that they would barbarously and ungratefully make a screen of their sovereign, and save themselves upon his ruin or disgrace.

What can be more vile, what more disloyal, than this! Yet who were louder in their prate about loyalty, than the worst ministers have ever been; even while they were weakening their master's hands, creating him enemies, and setting him at variance with his people? This is so true, that it has been sometimes impossible to love the prince without abhorring his servants, and to serve them without hurting or abusing him. Yet while they were very loyally undoing him, it was forsooth high disloyalty to resist or expose them. Whoever would recollect instances of this, need not go out of Europe, nor above forty years backwards: And for instances at home, as we can find no present ones, we fear none that are future.
G I am, &c.

NO. 37. SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1721. Character of a good and of an evil Magistrate, quoted from Algernon Sidney, Esq. (Gordon)↩

Sir,

The following are the sentiments of Mr. Sidney: I know it is objected that he is a republican; and it is dishonestly suggested that I am a republican, because I commend him as an excellent writer, and have taken a passage or two out of him. In answer to this, I shall only take notice, that the passages which I take from him are not republican passages, unless virtue and truth be republicans: That Mr. Sidney's book, for the

main of it, is eternally true, and agreeable to our own constitution, which is the best republick in the world, with a prince at the head of it: That our government is a thousand degrees nearer a-kin to a commonwealth (any sort of commonwealth now subsisting, or that ever did subsist in the world) than it is to absolute monarchy: That for myself, I hope in God never to see any other form of government in England than that which is now in England; and that if this be the style and spirit of a republican, I glory in it, as much as I despise those who take base methods to decry my writings, which are addressed to the common sense and experience of mankind. I hope that it is not yet made heresy in politicks, to assert that two and two make four.

G

"The good magistrate seeks the good of the people committed to his care, that he may perform the end of his institution: and knowing that chiefly to consist in justice and virtue, he endeavours to plant and propagate them; and by doing this he procures his own good, as well as that of the publick. He knows there is no safety where there is no strength, no strength without union, no union without justice, no justice where faith and truth in accomplishing publick and private engagements is wanting. This he perpetually inculcates; and thinks it a great part of his duty, by precept and example to educate the youth in a love of virtue and truth, that they may be seasoned with them, and filled with an abhorrence of vice and falsehood, before they attain that age which is exposed to the most violent temptations, and in which they may by their crimes bring the greatest mischiefs upon the publick. Me would do all this, though it were to his own prejudice. But as good actions always carry a reward with them, these contribute in a high measure to his advantage. By preferring the interest of the people before his own, he gains their affection, and all that is in their power comes with it; while he unites them to one another, he unites all to himself. In leading them to virtue, he increases their strength, and by that means provides for his own safety, glory, and power.

"On the other side, such as seek different ends must take different ways. When a magistrate fancies he is not made for the people, but the people for him; that he does not govern for them, but for himself; that the people live only to increase his glory, or to furnish matter for his pleasure; he does not enquire what he may do for them, but what he may draw from them: By this means he sets up an interest of profit, pleasure, or pomp in himself, repugnant to the good of the publick, for which he is made to be what he is. These contrary ends certainly divide the nation into parties; and while every one endeavours to advance that to which he is addicted, occasions of hatred, for

injuries every day done, or thought to be done, and received, must necessarily arise. This creates a most fierce and irreconcilable enmity; because the occasions are frequent, important, and universal, and the causes thought to be most just. The people think it to be the greatest of all crimes to convert that power to their hurt, which was instituted for their good; and that the injustice is aggravated by perjury and ingratitude, which comprehend all manner of ill; and the magistrate gives the name of sedition and rebellion to whatsoever they do for the preservation of themselves and their own rights. When men's spirits are thus prepared, a small matter sets them on fire; bu if no accident happens to blow them into a flame, the course ofjustice is certainly interrupted, the publick affairs are neglected; and when any occasion, whether foreign or domestick, arises, in which the magistrate stands in need of the people's assistance they whose affections are alienated, not only shew an unwillingness to serve him with their persons and estates, but fear that by delivering him from his distress, they strengthen their enemy, and enable him to oppress them; and he, fancying his will to be unjustly opposed, or his due more unjustly denied, is filled with a dislike of what he sees, and a fear of worse for the future. Whilst he endeavours to ease himself of the one, and to provide against the other, he usually increases the evils of both; and jealousies are on both sides multiplied. Every man knows that the governed are in a great measure under the power of the governor; but as no man, or number of men, is willingly subject to those that seek their ruin, such as fall into so great a misfortune, continue no longer under it than force, fear, or necessity may be able to oblige them. But such a necessity can hardly lie longer upon a great people, than till the evil be fully discovered and comprehended, and their virtue, strength, and power be united to expel it: The ill magistrate looks upon all things that may conduce to that end as so many preparatives to his ruin; and by the help of those who are of his party, will endeavour to prevent that union, and diminish that strength, virtue, power and courage, which he knows to be bent against him. And as truth, faithful dealing, and integrity of manners, are bonds of union, and helps to good, he will always, by tricks, artifices, cavils, and all means possible, endeavour to establish falsehood and dishonesty; whilst other emissaries and instruments of iniquity, by corrupting the youth, and such as can be brought to lewdness and debauchery, bring the people to such a pass, that they may neither care nor dare to vindicate their rights; and that those who would do it may so far suspect each other, as not to confer upon, much less to join in, any action tending to the publick deliverance.⚓✪

"This distinguishes the good from the bad magistrate; the faithful from the unfaithful; and those that adhere to either, living in the same principle, must walk in the same

ways. They who uphold the rightful power of a just magistracy, encourage virtue and justice, and teach men what they ought to do, suffer, or expect from others; they fix them upon principles of honesty, and generally advance every thing that tends to the increase of the valour, strength, greatness, and happiness of the nation, creating a good union among them, and bringing every man to an exact understanding of his own and the publick rights. On the other side he that would introduce an ill magistrate, make one evil who was good, or preserve him in the administration of injustice when he is corrupted, must always open the way for him by vitiating the people, corrupting their manners, destroying the validity of oaths, teaching such evasions, equivocations, and frauds, as are 1ncons1s- tent with the thoughts that become men of virtue and courage; and overthrowing the confidence they ought to have in each other, make it impossible for them to unite amongst themselves. The like arts must be used with the magistrate: He cannot be for their turns, till he is persuaded to believe he has no dependence upon, and owes no duty to, the people; that he is of himself, and not by their institution; that no man ought to enquire into, nor be judge of, his actions; that all obedience is due to him, whether he be good or bad, wise or foolish, a father or an enemy to his country. This being calculated for his personal interest, he must pursue the same designs, or his kingdom is divided within itself, and cannot subsist. By this means, those who flatter his humour come to be accounted his friends, and the only men that are thought worthy of great trusts; while such as are of another mind are exposed to all persecution. These are always such as excel in virtue, wisdom, and greatness of spirit: They have eyes, and they will always see the way they go; and leaving fools to be guided by implicit faith, will distinguish between good and evil, and choose that which is best; they will judge of men by their actions, and by them discovering whose servant every man is, know whether he is to be obeyed or not. Those who are ignorant of all good, careless, or enemies to it, take a more compendious way: Their slavish, vicious, and base natures, inclining them to seek only private and present advantage, they easily slide into a blind dependence upon one who has wealth and power; and desiring only to know his will, care not what injustice they do, if they may be rewarded. They worship what they find in the temple, though it be the vilest of idols; and always like that best which is worst, because it agrees with their inclinations and principles. When a party comes to be erected upon such a foundation, debauchery, lewdness, and dishonesty are the true badges of it; such as wear them are cherished; but the principal marks of favour are reserved for them who are the most industrious in mischief, either by seducing the people with the allurements of sensual pleasures, or corrupting their understandings with false and slavish doctrines."

I am, &c.

John Trenchard, *Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects.* Four volumes in Two, edited and annotated by Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995). Vol. 1. 1/2/2017.
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1237>

NO. 38. SATURDAY, JULY 22, 1721. The Right and Capacity of the People to judge of Government. (Gordon)

Sir,

The world has, from time to time, been led into such a long maze of mistakes, by those who gained by deceiving, that whoever would instruct mankind, must begin with removing their errors; and if they were every where honestly apprized of truth, and restored to their senses, there would not remain one nation of bigots or slaves under the sun: A happiness always to be wished, but never expected!

In most parts of the earth there is neither light nor liberty; and even in the best parts of it they are but little encouraged, and coldly maintained; there being, in all places, many engaged, through interest, in a perpetual conspiracy against them. They are the two greatest civil blessings, inseparable in their interests, and the mutual support of each other; and whoever would destroy one of them, must destroy both. Hence it is, that we every where find tyranny and imposture, ignorance and slavery, joined together; and oppressors and deceivers mutually aiding and paying constant court to each other. Where-ever truth is dangerous, liberty is precarious.

Of all the sciences that I know in the world, that of government concerns us most, and is the easiest to be known, and yet is the least understood. Most of those who manage it would make the lower world believe that there is I know not what difficulty and mystery in it, far above vulgar understandings; which proceeding of theirs is direct craft and imposture: Every ploughman knows a good government from a bad one, from the effects of it: he knows whether the fruits of his labour be his own, and whether he enjoy them in peace and security: And if he do not know the principles of government, it is for want of thinking and enquiry, for they lie open to common sense; but people are generally taught not to think of them at all, or to think wrong of them.

What is government, but a trust committed by all, or the most, to one, or a few, who are to attend upon the affairs of all, that every one may, with the more security, attend upon his own? A great and honourable trust; but too seldom honourably executed; those who possess it having it often more at heart to increase their power, than to make it useful; and to be terrible, rather than beneficent. It is therefore a trust, which ought to be bounded with many and strong restraints, because power renders men wanton, insolent to others, and fond of themselves. Every violation therefore of this trust, where such violation is considerable, ought to meet with proportionable punishment; and the smallest violation of it ought to meet with some, because indulgence to the least faults of magistrates may be cruelty to a whole people.

Honesty, diligence, and plain sense, are the only talents necessary for the executing of this trust; and the public good is its only end: As to refinements and finesses, they are often only the false appearances of wisdom and parts, and oftener tricks to hide guilt and emptiness; and they are generally mean and dishonest: they are the arts of jobbers in politicks, who, playing their own game under the publick cover, subsist upon poor shifts and expedients; starved politicians, who live from hand to mouth, from day to day, and following the little views of ambition, avarice, revenge, and the like personal passions, are ashamed to avow them, yet want souls great enough to forsake them; small wicked statesmen, who make a private market of the publick, and deceive it, in order to sell it.

These are the poor parts which great and good governors scorn to play, and cannot play; their designs, like their stations, being purely publick, are open and undisguised. They do not consider their people as their prey, nor lie in ambush for their subjects; nor dread, and treat and surprize them like enemies, as all ill magistrates do; who are not governors, but jailers and sponges, who chain them and squeeze them, and yet take it very ill if they do but murmur; which is yet much less than a people so abused ought to do. There have been times and countries, when publick ministers and publick enemies have been the same individual men. What a melancholy reflection is this, that the most terrible and mischievous foes to a nation should be its own magistrates! And yet in every enslaved country, which is almost every country, this is their woeful case.

Honesty and plainness go always together, and the makers and multipliers of mysteries, in the political way, are shrewdly to be suspected of dark designs. Cincinnatus was taken from the plough to save and defend the Roman state; an office which he executed honestly and successfully, without the grimace and gains of a statesman. Nor did he afterwards continue obstinately at the head of affairs, to form a party, raise a

fortune, and settle himself in power: As he came into it with universal consent, he resigned it with universal applause.

It seems that government was not in those days become a trade, at least a gainful trade. Honest Cincinnatus was but a farmer: And happy had it been for the Romans, if, when they were enslaved, they could have taken the administration out of the hands of the emperors, and their refined politicians, and committed it to such farmers, or any farmers. It is certain, that many of their imperial governors acted more ridiculously than a board of ploughmen would have done, and more barbarously than a club of butchers could have done.

But some have said, It is not the business of private man to meddle with government. A bold, false, and dishonest saying; and whoever says it, either knows not what he says, or cares not, or slavishly speaks the sense of others. It is a cant now almost forgot in England, and which never prevailed but when liberty and the constitution were attacked, and never can prevail but upon the like occasion.

It is a vexation to be obliged to answer nonsense, and confute absurdities: But since it is and has been the great design of this paper to maintain and explain the glorious principles of liberty, and to expose the arts of those who would darken or destroy them; I shall here particularly shew the wickedness and stupidity of the above saying; which is fit to come from no mouth but that of a tyrant or a slave, and can never be heard by any man of an honest and free soul, without horror and indignation: It is, in short, a saying, which ought to render the man who utters it for ever incapable of place or credit in a free country, as it shews the malignity of his heart, and the baseness of his nature, and as it is the pronouncing of a doom upon our constitution. A crime, or rather a complication of crimes, for which a lasting infamy ought to be but part of the punishment.

But to the falsehood of the thing: Publick truths ought never to be kept secrets; and they who do it, are guilty of a solecism, and a contradiction: Every man ought to know what it concerns all to know. Now, nothing upon earth is of a more universal nature than government; and every private man upon earth has a concern in it, because in it is concerned, and nearly and immediately concerned, his virtue, his property, and the security of his person: And where all these are best preserved and advanced, the government is best administered; and where they are not, the government is impotent, wicked, or unfortunate; and where the government is so, the people will be so, there being always and every where a certain sympathy and analogy between the nature of

the government and the nature of the people. This holds true in every instance. Public men are the patterns of private; and the virtues and vices of the governors become quickiy the virtues and vices of the governed.
Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.

Nor is it example alone that does it. Ill governments, subsisting by vice and rapine, are jealous of private virtue, and enemies to private property. Opes pro crimine; & ob virtutes certissimum exitium. They must be wicked and mischievous to be what they are; nor are they secure while any thing good or valuable is secure. Hence it is, that to drain, worry, and debauch their subjects, are the steady maxims of their politicks, their favourite arts of reigning. In this wretched situation the people, to be safe, must be poor and lewd: There will be but little industry where property is precarious; small honesty where virtue is dangerous.

Profuseness or frugality, and the like virtues or vices, which affect the publick, will be practised in the City, if they be practised in the court; and in the country, if they be in the City. Even Nero (that royal monster in man's shape) was adored by the common herd at Rome, as much as he was flattered by the great; and both the little and the great admired, or pretended to admire, his manners, and many to imitate them. Tacitus tells us, that those sort of people long lamented him, and rejoiced in the choice of a successor that resembled him, even the profligate Otho.

Good government does, on the contrary, produce great virtue, much happiness, and many people. Greece and Italy, while they continued free, were each of them, for the number of inhabitants, like one continued city; for virtue, knowledge, and great men, they were the standards of the world; and that age and country that could come nearest to them, has ever since been reckoned the happiest. Their government, their free government, was the root of all these advantages, and of all this felicity and renown; and in these great and fortunate states the people were the principals in the government; laws were made by their judgment and authority, and by their voice and commands were magistrates created and condemned. The city of Rome could conquer the world; nor could the great Persian monarch, the greatest then upon earth, stand before the face of one Greek city.

But what are Greece and Italy now? Rome has in it a herd of pampered monks, and a few starving lay inhabitants; the Campania of Rome, the finest spot of earth in Europe, is a desert. And for the modern Greeks, they are a few abject contemptible slaves, kept

under ignorance, chains, and vileness, by the Turkish monarch, who keeps a great part of the globe intensely miserable, that he may seem great without being so.

Such is the difference between one government and another, and of such important concernment is the nature and administration of government to a people. And to say that private men have nothing to do with government, is to say that private men have nothing to do with their own happiness and misery.

What is the publick, but the collective body of private men, as every private man is a member of the publick? And as the whole ought to be concerned for the preservation of every private individual, it is the duty of every individual to be concerned for the whole, in which himself is included.

One man, or a few men, have often pretended the publick, and meant themselves, and consulted their own personal interest, in iristances essential to its well-being; but the whole people, by consulting their own interest, consult the publick, and act for the publick by acting for themselves: This is particularly the spirit of our constitution, in which the whole nation is represented; and our records afford instances, where the House of Commons have declined entering upon a question of importance, till they had gone into the country, and consulted their principals, the people: So far were they from thinking that private men had no right to meddle with government. In truth, our whole worldly happiness and misery (abating for accidents and diseases) are owing to the order or mismanagement of government; and he who says that private men have no concern with government, does wisely and modestly tell us, that men have no concern in that which concerns them most; it is saying that people ought not to concern themselves whether they be naked or clothed, fed or starved, deceived or instructed, and whether they be protected or destroyed: What nonsense and servitude in a free and wise nation!

For myself, who have thought pretty much of these matters, I am of opinion, that a whole nation are like to be as much attached to themselves, as one man or a few men are like to be, who may by many means be detached from the interest of a nation. It is certain that one man, and several men, may be bribed into an interest opposite to that of the publick; but it is as certain that a whole country can never find an equivalent for itself, and consequently a whole country can never be bribed. It is the eternal interest of every nation, that their government should be good; but they who direct it frequently reason a contrary way and find their own account in plunder and oppression; and while the publick voice is pretended to be declared, by one or a few, for vile and

private ends, the publick know nothing of what is done, till they feel the terrible effects of it.

By the Bill of Rights, and the Act of Settlement, at the Revolution; a right is asserted to the people applying to the King and to the Parliament, by petition and address, for a redress of publick grievances and mismanagements, when such there are, of which they are left to judge; and the difference between free and enslaved countries lies principally here, that in the former, their magistrates must consult the voice and interest of the people; but in the latter, the private will, interest, and pleasure of the governors, are the sole end and motives of their administration.

Such is the difference between England and Turkey; which difference they who say that private men have no right to concern themselves with government, would absolutely destroy; they would convert magistrates into bashaws, and introduce popery into politicks. The late Revolution stands upon the very opposite maxim; and that any man dares to contradict it since the Revolution, would be amazing, did we not know that there are, in every country, hirelings who would betray it for a sop.
G. I am, &c.

NO. 59. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1721. Liberty provedto be the unalienable Right of all Mankind. (Trenchard)↩️

Sir,

I intend to entertain my readers with dissertations upon liberty, in some of my succeeding letters; and shall, as a preface to that design, endeavour to prove in this, that liberty is the unalienable right of all mankind.

All governments, under whatsoever form they are administered, ought to be administered for the good of the society; when they are otherwise administered, they cease to be government, and become usurpation. This being the end of all government, even the most despotick have this limitation to their authority: In this respect, the only difference between the most absolute princes and limited magistrates, is, that in free governments there are checks and restraints appointed and expressed in the constitution itself: In despotick governments, the people submit themselves to the prudence

and discretion of the prince alone: But there is still this tacit condition annexed to his power, that he must act by the unwritten laws of discretion and prudence, and employ it for the sole interest of the people, who give it to him, or suffer him to enjoy it, which they ever do for their own sakes.

Even in the most free governments, single men are often trusted with discretionary power: But they must answer for that discretion to those that trust them. Generals of armies and admirals of fleets have often unlimited commissions; and yet are they not answerable for the prudent execution of those commissions? The Council of Ten, in Venice, have absolute power over the liberty and life of every man in the state: But if they should make use of that power to slaughter, abolish, or enslave the senate; and, like the Decemviri of Rome, to set up themselves; would it not be lawful for those, who gave them that authority for other ends, to put those ten unlimited traitors to death, any way that they could? The crown of England has been for the most part entrusted with the sole disposal of the money given for the Civil List, often with the application of great sums raised for other publick uses; yet, if the lord-treasurer had applied this money to the dishonour of the King, and ruin of the people (though by the private direction of the crown itself) will any man say that he ought not to have compensated for his crime, by the loss of his head and his estate?

I have said thus much, to shew that no government can be absolute in the sense, or rather nonsense, of our modern dogmatizers, and indeed in the sense too commonly practised. No barbarous conquest; no extorted consent of miserable people, submitting to the chain to escape the sword; no repeated and hereditary acts of cruelty, though called succession, no continuation of violence, though named prescription; can alter, much less abrogate, these fundamental principles of government itself, or make the means of preservation the means of destruction, and render the condition of mankind infinitely more miserable than that of the beasts of the field, by the sole privilege of that reason which distinguishes them from the brute creation.

Force can give no title but to revenge, and to the use of force again; nor could it ever enter into the heart of any man, to give to another power over him, for any other end but to be exercised for his own advantage: And if there are any men mad or foolish enough to pretend to do otherwise, they ought to be treated as idiots or lunaticks; and the reason of their conduct must be derived from their folly and frenzy.

All men are born free; liberty is a gift which they receive from God himself; nor can they alienate the same by consent, though possibly they may forfeit it by crimes. No

man has power over his own life, or to dispose of his own religion; and cannot consequently transfer the power of either to any body else: Much less can he give away the lives and liberties, religion or acquired property of his posterity, who will be born as free as he himself was born, and can never be bound by his wicked and ridiculous bargain.

The right of the magistrate arises only from the right of private men to defend themselves, to repel injuries, and to punish those who commit them: That right being conveyed by the society to their publick representative, he can execute the same no further than the benefit and security of that society requires he should. When he exceeds his commission, his acts are as extrajudicial as are those of any private officer usurping an unlawful authority, that is, they are void; and every man is answerable for the wrong which he does. A power to do good can never become a warrant for doing evil.

But here arises a grand question, which has perplexed and puzzled the greatest part of mankind: Yet, I think, the answer to it easy and obvious. The question is, who shall be judge whether the magistrate acts justly, and pursues his trust? To this it is justly said, that if those who complain of him are to judge him, then there is a settled authority above the chief magistrate, which authority must be itself the chief magistrate; which is contrary to the supposition; and the same question and difficulty will recur again upon this new magistracy. All this I own to be absurd; and I aver it to be at least as absurd to affirm, that the person accused is to be the decisive judge of his own actions, when it is certain that he will always judge and determine in his own favour; and thus the whole race of mankind will be left helpless under the heaviest injustice, oppression, and misery, that can afflict human nature.

But if neither magistrates, nor they who complain of magistrates, and are aggrieved by them, have a right to determine decisively, the one for the other; and if there be no common established power, to which both are subject; then every man interested in the success of the contest, must act according to the light and dictates of his own conscience, and inform it as well as he can. Where no judge is nor can be appointed, every man must be his own; that is, when there is no stated judge upon earth, we must have recourse to heaven, and obey the will of heaven, by declaring ourselves on that which we think the juster side.

If the Senate and people of Rome had differed irreconcilably, there could have been no common judge in the world between them; and consequently no remedy but the last: For that government consisting in the union of the nobles and the people, when they

differed, no man could determine between them; and therefore every man must have been at liberty to provide for his own security, and the general good, in the best manner he was able. In that case the common judge ceasing, every one was his own: The government becoming incapable of acting, suffered a political demise: The constitution was dissolved; and there being no government in being, the people were in the state of nature again.

The same must be true, where two absolute princes, governing a country, come to quarrel, as sometimes two Caesars in partnership did, especially towards the latter end of the Roman empire; or where a sovereign council govern a country, and their votes come equally to be divided. In such a circumstance, every man must take that side which he thinks most for the publick good, or choose any proper measures for his own security: For, if I owe my allegiance to two princes agreeing, or to the majority of a council; when between these princes there is no longer any union, nor in that council any majority, no submission can be due to that which is not; and the laws of nature and self-preservation must take place, where there are no other.

The case is still the same, when there is any dispute about the titles of absolute princes, who govern independently on the states of a country, and call none. Here too every man must judge for himself what party he will take, to which of the titles he will adhere; and the like private judgment must guide him, whenever a question arises whether the said prince be an idiot or a lunatick, and consequently whether he be capable or incapable of government. Where there are no states, there can be no other way of judging; but by the judgment of private men the capacity of the prince must be judged, and his fate determined. Lunacy and idiotism are, I think, allowed by all to be certain disqualifications for government; indeed they are as much so, as if he were deaf, blind, and dumb, or even dead. He who can neither execute an office, nor appoint a deputy, is not fit for one.

Now I would fain know, why private men may not as well use their judgment in an instance that concerns them more; I mean that of a tyrannical government, of which they hourly feel the sad effects, and sorrowful proofs; whereas they have not by far the equal means of coming to a certainty about the natural incapacity of their governor. The persons of great princes are known but to few of their subjects, and their parts to much fewer; and several princes have, by the management of their wives, or ministers or murderers, reigned a good while after they were dead. In truth, I think it is as much the business and right of the people to judge whether their prince be good or bad, whether a father or an enemy, as to judge whether he be dead or alive; unless it be

said (as many such wise things have been said) that they may judge whether he can govern them, but not whether he does; and that it behoves them to put the administration in wiser hands, if he be a harmless fool, but it is impious to do it, if he be only a destructive tyrant; that want of speech is a disqualification, but want of humanity, none.

That subjects were not to judge of their governors, or rather for themselves in the business of government, which of all human things concerns them most, was an absurdity that never entered into the imagination of the wise and honest ancients: Who, following for their guide that everlasting reason, which is the best and only guide in human affairs, carried liberty, and human happiness, the legitimate offspring and work of liberty, to the highest pitch that they were capable of arriving at. But the above absurdity, with many others as monstrous and mischievous, were reserved for the discovery of a few wretched and dreaming Mahometan and Christian monks, who, ignorant of all things, were made, or made themselves, the directors of all things; and bewitching the world with holy lies and unaccountable ravings, dressed up in barbarous words and uncouth phrases, bent all their fairy force against common sense and common liberty and truth, and founded a pernicious, absurd, and visionary empire upon their ruins. Systems without sense, propositions without truth, religion without reason, a rampant church without charity, severity without justice, and government without liberty or mercy, were all the blessed handy-works of these religious mad-men, and godly pedants; who, by pretending to know the other world, cheated and confounded this. Their enmity to common sense, and want of it, were their warrants for governing the sense of all mankind: By lying, they were thought the champions of the truth; and by their fooleries, impieties, and cruelty, were esteemed the favourites and confidents of the God of wisdom, mercy, and peace.

These were the men, who, having demolished all sense and human judgment, first made it a principle, that people were not to judge of their governor and government, nor to meddle with it; nor to preserve themselves from publick destroyers, falsely calling themselves governors: Yet these men, who thus set up for the support and defenders of government, without the common honesty of distinguishing the good from the bad, and protection from murder and depredation, were at the same time themselves the constant and avowed troublers of every government which they could not direct and command; and every government, however excellent, which did not make their reveries its own rules, and themselves alone its peculiar care, has been honoured with their professed hatred; whilst tyrants and publick butchers, who flattered them, have

been deified. This was the poor state of Christendom before the Reformation; and I wish I could say, of no parts of it since.

This barbarous anarchy in reasoning and politicks, has made it necessary to prove propositions which the light of nature had demonstrated. And, as the apostles were forced to prove to the misled Gentiles, that they were no gods which were made with hands; I am put to prove, that the people have a right to judge, whether their governors were made for them, or they for their governors? Whether their governors have necessary and natural qualifications? Whether they have any governors or no? And whether, when they have none, every man must not be his own? I therefore return to instances and illustrations from facts which cannot be denied; though propositions as true as facts may, by those especially who are defective in point of modesty or discernment.

In Poland, according to the constitution of that country, it is necessary, we are told, that, in their diets, the consent of every man present must be had to make a resolve effectual: And therefore, to prevent the cutting of people's throats, they have no remedy but to cut the throats of one another; that is, they must pull out their sabres, and force the refractory members (who are always the minority) to submit. And amongst us in England, where a jury cannot agree, there can be no verdict; and so they must fast till they do, or till one of them is dead, and then the jury is dissolved.

This, from the nature of things themselves, must be the constant case in all disputes between dominion and property. Where the interest of the governors and that of the governed clash, there can be no stated judge between them: To appeal to a foreign power, is to give up the sovereignty; for either side to submit, is to give up the question: And therefore, if they themselves do not amicably determine the dispute between themselves, heaven alone must. In such case, recourse must be had to the first principles of government itself; which being a departure from the state of nature, and a union of many families forming themselves into a political machine for mutual protection and defence, it is evident, that this formed relation can continue no longer than the machine subsists and can act; and when it does not, the individuals must return to their former state again. No constitution can provide against what will happen when that constitution is dissolved. Government is only an appointment of one or more persons, to do certain actions for the good and emolument of the society; and if the persons thus interested will not act at all, or act contrary to their trust, their power must return of course to those who gave it.

Suppose, for example, the Grand Monarch, as he was called, had bought a neighbouring kingdom, and all the lands in it, from the courtiers, and the majority of the people's deputies; and amongst the rest, the church-lands, into the bargain, with the consent of their convocation or synod, or by what other name that assembly was called; would the people and clergy have thought themselves obliged to have made good this bargain, if they could have helped it? I dare say that neither would; but, on the contrary, that the people would have had the countenance of these reverend patriots to have told their representatives in round terms, that they were chosen to act for the interest of those that sent them, and not for their own; that their power was given them to protect and defend their country, and not to sell and enslave it.

This supposition, as wild as it seems, yet is not absolutely and universally impossible. King John actually sold the kingdom of England to his Holiness: And there are people in all nations ready to sell their country at home; and such can never have any principles to with-hold them from selling it abroad.

It is foolish to say, that this doctrine can be mischievous to society, at least in any proportion to the wild ruin and fatal calamities which must befall, and do befall the world where the contrary doctrine is maintained: For, all bodies of men subsisting upon their own substance, or upon the profits of their trade and industry, find their account so much in ease and peace, and have justly such terrible apprehensions of civil disorders, which destroy every thing that they enjoy; that they always bear a thousand injuries before they return one, and stand under the burdens as long as they can bear them; as I have in another letter observed.

What with the force of education, and the reverence which people are taught, and have been always used to pay to princes; what with the perpetual harangues of flatterers, the gaudy pageantry and outside of power, and its gilded ensigns, always glittering in their eyes; what with the execution of the laws in the sole power of the prince; what with all the regular magistrates, pompous guards and standing troops, with the fortified towns, the artillery, and all the magazines of war, at his disposal; besides large revenues, and multitudes of followers and dependants, to support and abet all that he does: Obedience to authority is so well secured, that it is wild to imagine, that any number of men, formidable enough to disturb a settled state, can unite together and hope to overturn it, till the publick grievances are so enormous, the oppression so great, and the disaffection so universal, that there can be no question remaining, whether their calamities be real or imaginary, and whether the magistrate has protected or endeavoured to destroy his people.

This was the case of Richard II, Edward II, and James II and will ever be the case under the same circumstances. No society of men will groan under oppressions longer than they know how to throw them off; whatever unnatural whimsies and fairy notions idle and sedentary babblers may utter from colleges and cloisters; and teach to others, for vile self-ends, doctrines, which they themselves are famous for not practising.

Upon this principle of people's judging for themselves, and resisting lawless force, stands our late happy Revolution, and with it the just and rightful title of our most excellent sovereign King George, to the scepter of these realms; a scepter which he has, and I doubt not will ever sway, to his own honour, and the honour, protection, and prosperity of us his people.
T I am, &c.

NO. 60. SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1722. All Government proved to be instituted by Men, and only to intend the general Good of Men. (Trenchard)↩

Sir,

There is no government now upon earth, which owes its formation or beginning to the immediate revelation of God, or can derive its existence from such revelation: It is certain, on the contrary, that the rise and institution or variation of government, from time to time, is within the memory of men or of histories; and that every government, which we know at this day in the world, was established by the wisdom and force of mere men, and by the concurrence of means and causes evidently human. Government therefore can have no power, but such as men can give, and such as they actually did give, or permit for their own sakes: Nor can any government be in fact framed but by consent, if not of every subject, yet of as many as can compel the rest; since no man, or council of men, can have personal strength enough to govern multitudes by force, or can claim to themselves and their families any superiority, or natural sovereignty over their fellow-creatures naturally as good as them. Such strength, therefore, where-ever it is, is civil and accumulative strength, derived from the laws and constitutions of the society, of which the governors themselves are but members.

So that to know the jurisdiction of governors, and its limits, we must have recourse to

the institution of government, and ascertain those limits by the measure of power, which men in the state of nature have over themselves and one another: And as no man can take from many, who are stronger than him, what they have no mind to give him; and he who has not consent must have force, which is itself the consent of the stronger; so no man can give to another either what is none of his own, or what in its own nature is inseparable from himself; as his religion particularly is.

Every man's religion is his own; nor can the religion of any man, of what nature or figure soever, be the religion of another man, unless he also chooses it; which action utterly excludes all force, power, or government. Religion can never come without conviction, nor can conviction come from civil authority; religion, which is the fear of God, cannot be subject to power, which is the fear of man. It is a relation between God and our own souls only, and consists in a disposition of mind to obey the will of our great Creator, in the manner which we think most acceptable to him. It is independent upon all human directions, and superior to them; and consequently uncontrollable by external force, which cannot reach the free faculties of the mind, or inform the understanding, much less convince it. Religion therefore, which can never be subject to the jurisdiction of another, can never be alienated to another, or put in his power.

Nor has any man in the state of nature power over his own life, or to take away the life of another, unless to defend his own, or what is as much his own, namely, his property. This power therefore, which no man has, no man can transfer to another.

Nor could any man in the state of nature, have a right to violate the property of another; that is, what another had acquired by his art or labour; or to interrupt him in his industry and enjoyments, as long as he himself was not injured by that industry and those enjoyments. No man therefore could transfer to the magistrate that right which he had not himself.

No man in his senses was ever so wild as to give an unlimited power to another to take away his life, or the means of living, according to the caprice, passion, and unreasonable pleasure of that other: But if any man restrained himself from any part of his pleasures, or parted with any portion of his acquisitions, he did it with the honest purpose of enjoying the rest with the greater security, and always in subserviency to his own happiness, which no man will or can willingly and intentionally give away to any other whatsoever.

And if any one, through his own inadvertence, or by the fraud or violence of another,

can be drawn into so foolish a contract, he is relievable by the eternal laws of God and reason. No engagement that is wicked and unjust can be executed without injustice and wickedness: This is so true, that I question whether there be a constitution in the world which does not afford, or pretend to afford, a remedy for relieving ignorant, distressed, and unwary men, trepanned into such engagements by artful knaves, or frightened into them by imperious ones. So that here the laws of nature and general reason supersede the municipal and positive laws of nations; and no where oftener than in England. What else was the design, and ought to be the business, of our courts of equity? And I hope whole countries and societies are no more exempted from the privileges and protection of reason and equity, than are private particulars.

Here then is the natural limitation of the magistrate's authority: He ought not to take what no man ought to give; nor exact what no man ought to perform: All he has is given him, and those that gave it must judge of the application. In government there is no such relation as lord and slave, lawless will and blind submission; nor ought to be amongst men: But the only relation is that of father and children, patron and client, protection and allegiance, benefaction and gratitude, mutual affection and mutual assistance.

So that the nature of government does not alter the natural right of men to liberty, which in all political societies is alike their due: But some governments provide better than others for the security and impartial distribution of that right. There has been always such a constant and certain fund of corruption and malignity in human nature, that it has been rare to find that man, whose views and happiness did not center in the gratification of his appetites, and worst appetites, his luxury, his pride, his avarice, and lust of power; and who considered any publick trust reposed in him, with any other view, than as the means to satiate such unruly and dangerous desires! And this has been most eminently true of great men, and those who aspired to dominion. They were first made great for the sake of the publick, and afterwards at its expence. And if they had been content to have been moderate traitors, mankind would have been still moderately happy; but their ambition and treason observing no degrees, there was no degree of vileness and misery which the poor people did not often feel.

The appetites therefore of men, especially of great men, are carefully to be observed and stayed, or else they will never stay themselves. The experience of every age convinces us, that we must not judge of men by what they ought to do, but by what they will do; and all history affords but few instances of men trusted with great power without abusing it, when with security they could. The servants of society, that is to

say, its magistrates, did almost universally serve it by seizing it, selling it, or plundering it; especially when they were left by the society unlimited as to their duty and wages. In that case these faithful stewards generally took all; and, being servants, made slaves of their masters.

For these reasons, and convinced by woeful and eternal experience, societies found it necessary to lay restraints upon their magistrates or publick servants, and to put checks upon those who would otherwise put chains upon them; and therefore these societies set themselves to model and form national constitutions with such wisdom and art, that the publick interest should be consulted and carried at the same time, when those entrusted with the administration of it were consulting and pursuing their own.

Hence grew the distinction between arbitrary and free governments: Not that more or less power was vested in the one than in the other; nor that either of them lay under less or more obligations, in justice, to protect their subjects, and study their ease, prosperity, and security, and to watch for the same. But the power and sovereignty of magistrates in free countries was so qualified, and so divided into different channels, and committed to the direction of so many different men, with different interests and views, that the majority of them could seldom or never find their account in betraying their trust in fundamental instances. Their emulation, envy, fear, or interest, always made them spies and checks upon one another. By all which means the people have often come at the heads of those who forfeited their heads, by betraying the people.

In despotick governments things went far otherwise, those governments having been framed otherwise; if the same could be called governments, where the rules of publick power were dictated by private and lawless lust; where folly and madness often swayed the scepter, and blind rage wielded the sword. The whole weath of the state, with its civil or military power, being in the prince, the people could have no remedy but death and patience, while he oppressed them by the lump, and butchered them by thousands: Unless perhaps the ambition or personal resentments of some of the instruments of his tyranny procured a revolt, which rarely mended their condition.

The only secret therefore in forming a free government, is to make the interests of the governors and of the governed the same, as far as human policy can contrive. Liberty cannot be preserved any other way. Men have long found, from the weakness and depravity of themselves and one another, that most men will act for interest against duty, as often as they dare. So that to engage them to their duty, interest must be

linked to the observance of it, and danger to the breach of it. Personal advantages and security, must be the rewards of duty and obedience; and disgrace, torture, and death the punishment of treachery and corruption.

Human wisdom has yet found out but one certain expedient to effect this; and that is, to have the concerns of all directed by all, as far as possibly can be: And where the persons interested are too numerous, or live too distant to meet together on all emergencies, they must moderate necessity by prudence, and act by deputies, whose interest is the same with their own, and whose property is so intermingled with theirs, and so engaged upon the same bottom, that principals and deputies must stand and fall together. When the deputies thus act for their own interest, by acting for the interest of their principals; when they can make no law but what they themselves, and their posterity, must be subject to; when they can give no money, but what they must pay their share of; when they can do no mischief, but what must fall upon their own heads in common with their countrymen; their principals may then expect good laws, little mischief, and much frugality.

Here therefore lies the great point of nicety and care in forming the constitution, that the persons entrusted and representing, shall either never have any interest detached from the persons entrusting and represented, or never the means to pursue it. Now to compass this great point effectually, no other way is left, but one of these two, or rather both; namely, to make the deputies so numerous, that there may be no possibility of corrupting the majority; or, by changing them so often, that there is no sufficient time to corrupt them, and to carry the ends of that corruption. The people may be very sure, that the major part of their deputies being honest, will keep the rest so; and that they will all be honest, when they have no temptations to be knaves.

We have some sketch of this policy in the constitution of our several great companies, where the general court, composed of all its members, constitutes the legislature, and the consent of that court is the sanction of their laws; and where the administration of their affairs is put under the conduct of a certain number chosen by the whole. Here every man concerned saw the necessity of securing part of their property, by putting the persons entrusted under proper regulations; however remiss they may be in taking care of the whole. And if provision had been made, that, as a third part of the directors are to go out every year, so none should stay in above three (as I am told was at first promised), all juggling with courtiers, and raising great estates by confederacy, at the expence of the company, had, in a great measure, been prevented; though there were still wanting other limitations, which might have effectually obviated all those evils.

This was the ancient constitution of England: Our kings had neither revenues large enough, nor offices gainful and numerous enough in their disposal, to corrupt any considerable number of members; nor any force to frighten them. Besides, the same Parliament seldom or never met twice: For, the serving in it being found an office of burden, and not of profit, it was thought reasonable that all men qualified should, in their turns, leave their families and domestick concerns, to serve the publick; and their boroughs bore their charges. The only grievance then was, that they were not called together often enough, to redress the grievances which the people suffered from the court during their intermission: And therefore a law was made in Edward III's time, that Parliaments should be holden once a year.

But this law, like the late Queen's Peace, did not execute itself; and therefore the court seldom convened them, but when they wanted money, or had other purposes of their own to serve; and sometimes raised money without them: Which arbitrary proceeding brought upon the publick numerous mischiefs; and, in the reign of King Charles I, a long and bloody civil war. In that reign an act was passed, that they should meet of themselves, if they were not called according to the direction of that law; which was worthily repealed upon the restoration of King Charles II: And in the same kind fit, a great revenue was given him for life, and continued to his brother. By which means these princes were enabled to keep standing troops, to corrupt Parliaments, or to live without them; and to commit such acts of power as brought about, and indeed forced the people upon the late happy Revolution. Soon after which a new act was passed, that Parliaments should be rechosen once in three years: Which law was also repealed upon his Majesty's accession to the throne, that the present Parliament might have time to rectify those abuses which we labour under, and to make regulations proper to prevent them all for the future. All which has since been happily effected; and, I bless God, we are told, that the people will have the opportunity to thank them, in another election, for their great services to their country. I shall be always ready, on my part, to do them honour, and pay them my acknowledgments, in the most effectual manner in my power. But more of this in the succeeding papers.
T I am, &c.

NO. 61. SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1722. How free Governments are to be framed so as to last, and how they differ from such as are arbitrary. (Trenchard)↩

Sir,

The most reasonable meaning that can be put upon this apothegm, that virtue is its own reward, is, that it seldom meets with any other. God himself, who having made us best knows our natures, does not trust to the intrinsick excellence and native beauty of holiness alone, to engage us in its interests and pursuits, but recommends it to us by the stronger and more affecting motives of rewards and punishments. No wise man, therefore, will in any instance of moment trust to the mere integrity of another. The experience of all ages may convince us, that men, when they are above fear, grow for the most part above honesty and shame: And this is particularly and certainly true of societies of men, when they are numerous enough to keep one another in countenance; for when the weight of infamy is divided amongst many, no one sinks under his own burden.

Great bodies of men have seldom judged what they ought to do, by any other rule than what they could do. What nation is there that has not oppressed any other, when the same could be done with advantage and security? What party has ever had regard to the principles which they professed, or ever reformed the errors which they condemned? What company, or particular society of merchants or tradesmen, has ever acted for the interest of general trade, though it always filled their mouths in private conversation?

And yet men, thus formed and qualified, are the materials for government. For the sake of men it is instituted, by the prudence of men it must be conducted; and the art of political mechanism' is, to erect a firm building with such crazy and corrupt materials. The strongest cables are made out of loose hemp and flax; the world itself may, with the help of proper machines, be moved by the force of a single hair; and so may the government of the world, as well as the world itself. But whatever discourses I shall hereafter make upon this great and useful subject, I shall confine myself in this letter to free monarchical constitutions alone, and to the application of some of the principles laid down in my last.

It is there said, that when the society consists of too many, or when they live too far apart to be able to meet together, to take care of their own affairs, they can not otherwise preserve their liberties, than by choosing deputies to represent them, and to act for them; and that these deputies must be either so numerous, that there can be no means of corrupting the majority; or so often changed, that there shall be no time to do it so as to answer any end by doing it. Without one of these regulations, or both, I

lay it down as a certain maxim in politicks, that it is impossible to preserve a free government long.

I think I may with great modesty affirm, that in former reigns the people of England found no sufficient security in the number of their representatives. What with the crowd of offices in the gift of the crown, which were possessed by men of no other merit, nor held by any other tenure, but merely a capacity to get into the House of Commons, and the disservice which they could and would do their country there: What with the promises and expectations given to others, who by court-influence, and often by court-money, carried their elections: What by artful caresses, and the familiar and deceitful addresses of great men to weak men: What with luxurious dinners, and rivers of Burgundy, Champaign, and Tokay, thrown down the throats of gluttons; and what with pensions, and other personal gratifications, bestowed where wind and smoke would not pass for current coin: What with party watch-words and imaginary terrors, spread amongst the drunken 'squires, and the deluded and enthusiastick bigots, of dreadful designs in embryo, to blow up the Church, and the Protestant interest; and sometimes with the dread of mighty invasions just ready to break upon us from the man in the moon: I say, by all these corrupt arts, the representatives of the English people, in former reigns, have been brought to betray the people, and to join with their oppressors. So much are men governed by artful applications to their private passions and interest. And it is evident to me, that if ever we have a weak or an ambitious prince, with a ministry like him, we must find out some other resources, or acquiesce in the loss of our liberties. The course and transiency of human affairs will not suffer us to live always under the present righteous administration.

So that I can see no means in human policy to preserve the publick liberty and a monarchical form of government together, but by the frequent fresh elections of the people's deputies: This is what the writers in politicks call rotation of magistracy. Men when they first enter into magistracy, have often their former condition before their eyes: They remember what they themselves suffered, with their fellow-subjects, from the abuse of power, and how much they blamed it; and so their first purposes are to be humble, modest, and just; and probably, for some time, they continue so. But the possession of power soon alters and vitiates their hearts, which are at the same time sure to be leavened, and puffed up to an unnatural size, by the deceitful incense of false friends, and by the prostrate submission of parasites. First, they grow indifferent to all their good designs, then drop them: Next, they lose their moderation; afterwards, they renounce all measures with their old acquaintance and old principles; and seeing

themselves in magnifying glasses, grow, in conceit, a different species from their fellowsubjects; and so by too sudden degrees become insolent, rapacious and tyrannical, ready to catch at all means, often the vilest and most oppressive, to raise their fortunes as high as their imaginary greatness. So that the only way to put them in mind o their former condition, and consequently of the condition of other people, is often to reduce them to it; and to let others of equal capacities share of power in their turn: This also is the only way to qualify men, and make them equally fit for dominion and subjection.

A rotation therefore, in power and magistracy, is essentially necessary to a free government: It is indeed the thing itself; and constitutes, animates, and informs it, as much as the soul constitutes the man. It is a thing sacred and inviolable, where-ever liberty is thought sacred; nor can it ever be committed to the disposal of those who are trusted with the preservation of national constitutions: For though they may have the power to model it for the publick advantage, and for the more effectual security of that right; yet they can have none to give it up, or, which is the same thing, to make it useless.

The constitution of a limited monarchy, is the joint concurrence of the crown and of the nobles (without whom it cannot subsist) and of the body of the people, to make laws for the common benefit of the subject; and where the people, through number or distance, cannot meet, they must send deputies to speak in their names, and to attend upon their interest: These deputies therefore act by, under, and in subserviency to the constitution, and have not a power above it and over it.

In Holland, and some other free countries, the states are often obliged to consult their principals; and, in some instances, our own Parliaments have declined entering upon questions of importance, till they had gone into the country, and known the sentiments of those that sent them; as in all cases they ought to consult their inclinations as well as their interest. Who will say, that the Rump, or fag-end of the Long Parliament of forty-one, had any right to expel such members as they did not like? Or to watch for their absence, that they might seize to themselves, or give up to any body else, the right of those from whose confidence and credulity they derived the authority which they acted by?

With thanks to God, I own, that we have a prince so sensible of this right, and who owes his crown so entirely to the principles laid down, and I think fully proved in these letters; that it is impossible to suspect, either from his inclinations, his interest, or his

known justice, that he should ever fall into any measures to destroy that people, who have given him his crown, and supported him in it with so much generosity and expense; or that he should undermine, by that means, the ground upon which he stands. I do therefore the less regard the idle suspicions and calumnies of disaffected men, who would surmise, that a design is yet on foot to continue this Parliament; a reflection the most impudent and invidious that can be thrown upon his Majesty, his ministers, or his two houses; and a reflection that can come from none but professed, or at least from concealed, Jacobites.

It is no less than an insinuation, that our most excellent sovereign King George has a distrust of his faithful subjects; that he will refuse them the means of their own preservation, and the preservation of that constitution which they chose him to preserve; that he will shut his ears against their modest, just, and dutiful complaints; and that he apprehends danger from meeting them in a new and free-chosen Parliament. This is contrary to the tenor of his whole life and actions; who, as he has received three crowns from their gift, so he lies under all the ties of generosity, gratitude, and duty, to cherish and protect them, and to make them always great, free, and happy.

It is a most scandalous calumny upon his faithful servants, to suggest that any of them conscious of guilt and crimes, feared any thing from the most strict and rigorous inspection into their proceedings. Some of them have already stood the fiery trial, and come off triumphant with general approbation. They have, besides, the advantage of his Majesty's most gracious pardon, which they did not want, and which was not passed for their sakes. Who therefore can suspect, that patriots so uncorrupt, so prudent, and so popular, will dishonour their master, give up the constitution, ruin their country, and render themselves the objects of universal scorn, detestation, and cursing, by advising the most odious, dangerous, and destructive measures, that ever counsellors gave a prince?

It is a most ungrateful return to our illustrious representatives, to suggest, that men who have left their domestick concerns to serve their country at their own expence, and without any personal advantages, and have bestowed their labours upon the publick for a much longer time than their principals had at first a right to expect from them; and have, during all that time, been rectifying the abuses which have crept into our constitution; and have assisted his Majesty in going through two very useful and necessary wars, and have regulated our finances, and the expence of our guards and garrisons, and corrected many abuses in the fleet and the civil administration; and have taken effectual vengeance of all those who were concerned in promoting,

procuring, aiding, or assisting the late dreadful South-Sea project: I say, after so many things done by them for the publick honour and prosperity, it is the basest ingratitude to surmise, that any of them would give up that constitution which they were chosen, and have taken so much pains, to preserve.

I do indeed confess, if any invasion were to be feared from Muscovy, Mecklenburg, Spain, or Civita Vecchia; if new provinces were to be obtained abroad, new armies to be raised, or new fleets to be equipped, upon warlike expeditions; if new provision were wanting for the Civil List, and new taxes to be levied, or new companies to be erected to pay off the publick debts; if the universities were to be farther regulated, or any inspection were necessary into the increase of fees and exactions of civil officers; if there were the least ground to suspect bribery or corruption in a place where it should not be; or if there were any new project on foot to banish tyrannical and popish principles far out of the land: I say, that in such a scene of affairs, I dare not be altogether so positive in my assertion, that we ought to venture, and at all events to leave to chance, that which we are in possession of already. But as we are at present in the happy state of indolence and security, at peace with all the world and our own consciences; as little more money can be raised from the people, most of it being already in hand, which, according to the rules of good policy, unite dominion and property; as our benefactors too are generous and honourable, our boroughs not insensible or ungrateful, nor the counties themselves inexorable to shining merit; So it is much to be hoped, that another Parliament may be chosen equally deserving, and as zealous for the publick interest; or, at worst, there are honest and tried measures at hand, which will undoubtedly make them so. And I offer this as a conclusive, and I think a most convincing, argument, that the kingdom will be obliged with a new election.⚓✪
T. I am, &c.

NO. 66. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1722. Arbitrary Government proved incompatible with true Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. (Gordon)↩️

Sir,

I shall shew, in this paper, that neither the Christian religion, nor natural religion, nor

any thing else that ought to be called religion, can subsist under tyrannical governments, now that miracles are ceased. I readily confess, that such governments are fertile in superstition, in wild whimsies, delusive phantoms, and ridiculous dreams; proper to terrify the human soul, degrade its dignity, deface its beauty, and fetter it with slavish and unmanly fears, to render it a proper object of fraud, grimace, and imposition; and to make mankind the ready dupes of gloomy impostors, and the tame slaves of raging tyrants. For, servitude established in the mind, is best established.

But all these bewildered imaginations, these dark and dreadful horrors, which banish reason, and contract and embitter the heart, what have they to do with true religion, unless to destroy it? That religion, which improves and enlarges the faculties of men, exalts their spirits, and makes them brave for God and themselves; that religion, which gives them great and worthy conceptions of the Deity; and that religion which inspires them with generous and beneficent affections to one another, and with universal love and benevolence to the whole creation? No man can love God, if he love not his neighbour; and whoever loves his neighbour, will neither injure, revile, nor oppress him: Nor can we otherwise shew our love to God, than by kind, humane, and affectionate actions to his creatures: "A new commandment," says our blessed Saviour, "I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Almighty God, the great author of our nature, and of all things, who has the heavens for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, is raised far above the reach of our kindness, our malice, or our flattery. He derives infinite happiness from his own infinite perfections; nor can any frail power or actions of ours lessen or improve it: religion therefore, from which he can reap no advantage, was instituted by him for the sake of men, as the best means and the strongest motive to their own happiness, and mutual happiness; and by it men are taught and animated to be useful, assisting, forgiving, kind and merciful one to another. But to hurt, calumniate, or hate one another, for his sake, and in defence of any religion, is a flat contradiction to his religion, and an open defiance of the author of religion: And to quarrel about belief and opinions, which do not immediately and necessarily produce practical virtue and social duties, is equally wicked and absurd. This is to be wicked in behalf of righteousness, and to be cruel out of piety. A religion which begets selfishness and partiality only to a few, and its own followers, and which inspires hatred and outrage towards all the rest of the world, can never be the religion of the merciful and impartial maker and judge of the world. Speculations are only so far a part of religion, as they produce the moral duties of religion, general peace, and unlimited charity, publick spirit, equity, forbearance, and

good deeds to all men: And the worship of God is no longer the worship of God, than as it warms our minds with the remembrance of his gracious condescensions, his indulgent care, bounty, and providence, exercised towards us; and as it raises and forms our affections to an imitation of such his divine and unrestrained goodness, and to use one another kindly by his great example, who uses us all so. So that our worthy, tender, and beneficent behaviour to one another, is the best way to acknowledge his to us: It is the most acceptable way that we can worship him, and the way which he will best accept our worship: And whatever devotion has not this effect, or a contrary effect, is the dry or mad freaks of an enthusiast, and ought to be called by another and a properer name.

This is a general idea of true religion; these are the certain and only marks of it: All which, as they are opposite to the essence and spirit of an arbitrary government; so every arbitrary government is an enemy to the spirit of true religion, and defeats its ends. In these governments, in defiance of religion, humanity, and common sense, millions must be miserable to exalt an embellish one or a few, and to make them proud, arrogant, and great: Protection and security are no more; the spirit of the people is sunk, their industry discouraged and lost, or only employed to feed luxury and pride; and multitudes starve, that a few may riot and abound. All love to mankind is extinct, and virtue and publick spirit are dangerous or unknown; while vice, falsehood, and servile sycophancy, become necessary to maintain precarious safety and an ignominious life: And, in fine, men live upon the spoils of one another, like ravenous fishes and beasts of prey: They become rapacious, brutish, and savage to one another, as their cruel governors are to them all; and, as a further imitation of such masters, their souls are abject, mean, and villainous. To live upon prey, and worry [the] human race, is the genius and support of tyrants, as well as of wolves and tigers; and it is the spirit and practice of men to resemble their governors, and to act like them. Virtue and vice, in courts, run like water in a continual descent, and quickly overflow the inferior soil. Torva Leaena lupum, &c.

Now, what can be found here to answer the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion, which is all love, charity, meekness, mutual assistance, and mutual indulgence; and must either destroy tyranny, which destroys all these, or be destroyed by it? A religion given by God, to inspire men with every social virtue, and to furnish them with every argument for social happiness, will never find quarter, much less protection, from a government, which subsists by an unrelenting war against every virtue, and all human felicity. On the contrary, all its divine doctrines shall be perverted, all its divine

principles mangled, and both its principles and its precepts corrupted, disguised, and wrested, to be made free of the court: Truth will be made to patronize imposture, and meekness to support tyranny: Obedience to equal laws, and submission to just authority, shall be turned into a servile and crouching subjection to blind rage and inhuman fury; complaisant and respective behaviour into slavish flattery, and supple homage to power; meekness and humility into dejection, poorness of spirit, and bodily prostrations; charity, benevolence, and humanity, into a fiery and outrageous zeal to propagate fashionable and gainful opinions: Christian courage shall be changed into cruelty and brutish violence; impartial justice into savage severity; protection into oppression and plundering; the fear of God into the fear of man; and the worship of the Deity into an idolatrous adoration of a tyrant.

Though God Almighty sent his only son into the world to teach his will to men, and to confirm his mission by wonders and miracles; yet, having once fully manifested himself and his law, he has left it to be propagated and carried on by human means only, according to the holy writings inspired by him; and if the powers of the world will not submit to those directions, and will neither pursue them themselves, nor suffer their subjects to pursue them, nor leave them the means of doing it; then the Christian religion must take the fate of all sublunary things, and be lost from amongst men, unless heaven interpose again miraculously in its favour. Now the experience of all ages will convince us, that all tyrannical princes will be against the religion which is against them; and either abolish it, or, which is much worse, pervert it into a deadly and unnatural engine, to increase and defend that pride and power, which Christianity abhors; and to promote those evils and miseries, which Christianity forbids, and, were it left to itself, would prevent or relieve. A religion modelled by usurped power, to countenance usurpation and oppression, is as opposite to the Christian religion, as tyranny is to liberty, and wickedness to virtue. When religion is taught to speak court-language, and none are suffered to preach it, but such as speak the same dialect; when those who are ministers of the gospel, must be also the ministers of ambition, and either sanctify falsehood and violence, by the word of mercy and truth, or hold their tongues; when preferments and worldly honours are on the side of imposture, and galleys, racks and dungeons, are the rewards of conscience and piety; the good and efficacy of Christianity will be as effectually gone, as if it were formally exchanged for Mahometanism; and under those circumstances, if its name be retained, it is only retained to do evil, and might be as innocently banished with the thing.

The Christian religion has as rarely gained by courts, as courts have improved by the

Christian religion; and arbitrary courts have seldom meddled with it, but either to persecute it, or debate and corrupt it; nor could the power and fury of tyrants ever hurt or weaken it so much, as their pretended favours and countenance have done: By appearing for it, they turn their power most effectually against it. Their avowed persecution of Christianity, did only destroy Christians; but afterwards, while they set up for protecting none but the true Christians, that is, those that were as bad as themselves, and having no religion of their own, adopted blindly the religion of their prince and whilst they were for punishing all who were not true Christians, that is, all that were better than themselves, and would take their religion from no man's word, but only from the word of God; they lifted Christians against Christians, and disfigured, and undermined, and banished Christianity itself, by false friendship to its professors: And these professors thus corrupted, joining a holy title to an impious cause, concurred in the conspiracy, and contended fiercely in the name of Christ for secular advantages, which Christ never gave nor took, and for a secular sovereignty, which he rejected, and his gospel forbids. Thus one sort of tyranny was artfully made to support another, and both by a union of interests maintained a war against religion, under colour of defending it, and fought the author of it under his own banner; that is, as Dr. Tillotson finely says, they lied for the truth, and killed for God's sake.

The many various and contradictory opinions of weak enthusiasts, or of designing men, and all the different and repugnant interpretations of scripture, published and contended for by them, could have done but small prejudice to religion and society, if human authority had not interposed with its penalties and rewards annexed to the believing or not believing fortuitous speculations, useless notions, dry ideas, and the inconsistent reveries of disordered brains; or the selfish inventions of usurping Popes, ambitious synods, and turbulent and aspiring doctors, or the crafty schemes of discontented or oppressive statesmen: For all these have been the important causes, and the wicked fuel, of religious wars and persecutions.

It is so much the general interest of society to perform and to encourage all its members to perform the practical duties of religion, that if a stronger and more prevailing interest were not thrown by power into the contrary scale, there would be no difference amongst men about the nature and extent of their duties to magistrates, to parents, children, and to friends and neighbours: And if these social duties (the only duties which human society, as such, is concerned to promote) were agreed upon and practised, the magistrate would have no more to do with their opinions than with

their shape and complexion; nor could he know, if he would, by what method to alter them. No man's belief is in his own power, or can be in the power of another.

The utmost length that the power of the magistrate can in this matter extend, beyond that of exhortation, which is in every man's power, can be only to make hypocrites, slaves, fools, or atheists. When he has forced his subjects to belie their consciences, or to act against them, he has in effect driven them out of all religion, to bring them into his own; and when they thus see and feel the professed defender of religion overturning all its precepts, exhorting by bribes, rebuking by stripes, confiscations and dungeons, and making Christianity the instrument of fury, ambition, rapine, and tyranny; what can they think, but either that he is no Christian, or that Christianity is not true? If they come to suspect it of imposture, they grow infidels; if they grow into a belief that religion countenances bitterness, outrage, and severities, nay, commands all these, they become bigots; the worst and most mischievous character of the two: For, unbelievers, guided by the rules of prudence or good nature, may be good neighbors and inoffensive men; but bigotry, standing upon the ruins of reason, and being conducted by no light but that of an inflamed imagination, and a sour, bitter, and narrow spirit, there is no violence nor barbarity which it is not capable of wishing or acting.

Happiness is the chief end of man, and the saving of his soul is his chief happiness; so that every man is most concerned for his own soul, and more than any other can be: And if no obstruction be thrown in his way, he will for the most part do all in his power for his own salvation, and will certainly do it best; and when he has done all that he can, he has done all that he ought: people cannot be saved by force; nor can all the powers in the world together make one true Christian, or convince one man. Conviction is the province and effect of reason; when that fails, nothing but the grace of God can supply it: And what has the power and penalties of men to do either with reason or grace; which being both the gifts of God, are not to be conquered by chains, though they may be weakened, and even banished, by worldly allurements blended with Christianity, and by the worldly pride of its professors?

The methods of power are repugnant to the nature of conviction, which must either be promoted by exhortation, kindness, example, and arguments, or can never be promoted at all: Violence does, on the contrary, but provoke men, and confirm them in error; nor will they ever be brought to believe, that those who barbarously rob them of their present happiness, can be charitably concerned for their future.

It is evident in fact, that most of the different religious institutions now subsisting in

the world, have been founded upon ambition and pride; and were advanced, propagated, and established, by usurpation, faction, and oppression: They were begun for the most part by enthusiasts, or by designing and unpreferred churchmen; or at least occasioned by the continued usurpations and insults of cruel and oppressive ones, and always in times of faction and general discontent. Turbulent and aspiring men, discarded and discontented courtiers, or ambitious and designing statesmen, have taken advantage from these general disorders, or from the hot and giddy spirits of an enthusiastical or oppressed people, and from thence have formed parties; and setting themselves at the head, formed national establishments, with the concurrence of weak princes, sometimes in opposition to them, by the assistance of factious clergymen and factious assemblies, often by tumults and popular insurrections; and at last, under pretence of saving men's souls, they seized their property. A small acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, and the history of the Turks and Saracens, will shew such causes as these to have given rise to most of the national religious establishments upon earth. Nor can I see how any future one can arise by other means, whilst violence and worldly interest have any thing to do with them.

Such therefore as is the government of a country, such will be made its religion; and no body, I hope, is now to learn what is, and ever will be, the religion of most statesmen; even a religion of power, to do as little good and as much mischief as they please. Nor have churchmen, when they ruled states, had ever any other view; but having double authority, had generally double insolence, and remarkably less mercy and regard to conscience or property, than others who had fewer ties to be merciful and just: And therefore the sorest tyrants have been they, who united in one person the royalty and priesthood. The Pope's yoke is more grievous than that of any Christian prince upon earth; nor is there a trace of property, or felicity, or of the religion of Jesus Christ, found in the dominions of this father of Christendom; all is ignorance, bigotry, idolatry, barbarity, hunger, chains, and every species of misery. The Caliphs of Egypt, who founded the Saracen empire there, and maintained it for a great while, were at once kings and priests; and there never lived more raging bigots, or more furious and oppressive barbarians. The monarchy of Persia, which is also a severe tyranny, has the priesthood annexed to it; and the Sophi is at the same time the Caliph. The Turkish religion is founded on imposture, blended with outrageous and avowed violence; and by their religion, the imperial executioner is, next to their Alcoran, the most sacred thing amongst them: And though he be not himself chief priest, yet he creates and uncreates him at pleasure, and is, without the name of mufti, the chief doctor, or rather author of their religion; and we all know what sort of a religion it is.

In fact, as arbitrary princes want a religion suited to the genius of their power, they model their religion so as to serve all the purposes of tyranny; and debase, corrupt, discourage, or persecute all religion which is against tyranny, as all true religion is: For this reason, not one of the great absolute princes in Europe embraced the Reformation, nor would suffer his people to embrace it, but they were all bitter and professed enemies to it: Whereas all the great free states, except Poland, and most of the small free states, became Protestants. Thus the English, Scotch, the Dutch, the Bohemians, and Sweden and Denmark (which were then free kingdoms), the greatest part of Switzerland, with Geneva, and all the Hans-towns, which were not awed by the Emperor, threw off the popish yoke: And not one of the free popish states, out of Italy, could be ever brought to receive the Inquisition; and the state of Venice, the greatest free state there, to shew that they received it against their will, have taken wise care to render it ineffectual: And many of the popish free states would never come into persecution, which they knew would impoverish and dispeople them; and therefore the states of Arragon, Valencia, and Catalonia, opposed, as much as they were able, the expulsion of the Moors, which was a pure act of regal power, to the undoing of Spain; and therefore a destructive and barbarous act of tyranny. As to the Protestant countries, which have since lost their liberties, there is much miserable ignorance, and much bitter and implacable bigotry, but little religion, and no charity, amongst them.

We look upon Montezuma, and other tyrants, who worshipped God with human sacrifice, as so many monsters, and hug ourselves that we have no such sons of Moloch here in Europe; not considering, that every man put to death for his religion, by the Inquisition and elsewhere, is a real human sacrifice, as it is burning and butchering men for God's sake.

I think no body will deny, but that in King James's time, we owed the preservation of our religion to our liberties, which both our clergy and people almost unanimously concurred to defend, with a resolution and boldness worthy of Britons and freemen. And as the cause and blessings of liberty are still better understood, its spirit and interest daily increase. Most of the bishops, and many of the inferior clergy, are professedly in the principles of civil and religious liberty, notwithstanding the strong and early prejudices of education. And I hope soon to see them all as thorough advocates for publick liberty, as their predecessors were, upon grounds less just, in the times of popery; and then there will be an end of the pernicious and knavish distinction of Whig and Tory; and all the world will unite in paying them that respect which is due to their holy office.

I shall conclude with this short application; that as we love religion, and the author of it, we ought to love and preserve our liberties.⚓✪
G I am, &c.

John Trenchard, *Cato's Letters, vol. 3 March 10, 1722 to December 1, 1722* [1724]

source

NO. 72. SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1722. In absolute Monarchies the Monarch seldom rules, but his Creatures instead of him. That Sort of Government a Gradation of Tyrants. (GORDON) ↩

SIR,

The advocates for absolute monarchy argue as ignorantly as perversely, and build without a foundation; since, while they contend for unlimited submission to the monarch's will, they must either suppose, that all acts of power proceed from his will, or else that the will of his ministers is also unlimited, and their orders are irresistible. So that either all his servants, instruments, and executioners, are absolute monarchs too; which none but a madman will say: Or that he himself does immediately direct ev·ery thing that is done; which no man of common sense will affirm. Indeed such princes have the least share of their own power, andseldom know what is done, or care.

Monsieur Thevenot tells us, that the Grand Seignior minds nothing but his pleasures, the pranks of mutes and buffoons, who are his constant attendants, and always study-

ing new freaks and grimaces to divert him; and the dalliances of women, sent to him from all quarters by his bashaws. His power is absolutely despotick: His will, that is to say, his lust, his maggots, or his rage, is his only law, and the only bounds to the authority of this vicegerent of God. By virtue of his sacred power, he may rob any man, or all men, of their estates, and no man has a right to complain: He may put the best men to the most ignominious and barbarous death, and exalt the vilest criminals to the highest dignities; and no man must ask why. "This unlimited power of the Sultan," says Monsieur Thevenot, "is founded on the Mahometan religion, which enjoins a blind submission to all his commands, on pain of damnation."

A blessed and beneficent religion this! and a single sovereignty with a witness! But this monstrous and formidable power, which is holden by him, is directed by his ministers without him. They employ both him and themselves; him, far from his duty, in unmanly pleasures; themselves, in the mismanagement of his affairs, and in prostituting his name and authority, to serve their own views. He wears the crown, and lives in a brothel; they sway the sceptre, suck the people's blood, and fill their own coffers. The Grand Vizier, or first minister, is, in effect, king over his master: He has the custody of the imperial power, and discharges the office of the Grand Seignior: And as to the bashaws, who are likewise so many kings in their provinces, Thevenot says, they abuse their authority, and are more arbitrary than the Sultan himself, their design and business being to raise sudden fortunes by their spoils and oppression: And the Grand Seignior is forced to dissemble his knowledge of this rapine and exorbitancy, for want of power to punish or redress them; for that these menhave the soldiers more at their devotion than he has.

As to the Turkish civil officers and judges, he says they do what they will, and judge as they please; for all their written laws being contained in the Alcoran, which is but a short book, they are so ambiguously expressed, and so loosely delivered, that the cadi, as well as the bashaw, wrests them as he pleases; and, judging without appeal, both these greedy and rapacious officers turn justice into oppression, and make it a stale to their avarice.

Such is the spirit and effects of lawless power, lodged in one man; every officer and creature of his will have it; and, by setting up one tyrant, a thousand are set up. As this power is never to be got or preserved, but by violence and oppression; all men who have any share in executing and ministering, and defending the same, must be oppressors too. As no man is an oppressor for the mere pleasure and security of another, but only for his own sake and gratification; so all the servants of tyranny do, in their

master's name, but rob and spoil for themselves; and every servant is a master. All over the Ottoman Empire, there is a great Turk in every town, and he at Constantinople is perhaps the idlest and most harmless of them all; and the exercise of the Turkish government is nothing else but a daily and general plunder, a contention between the governors who shall spoil best and get most. Nor, let them plunder and butcher as they will, is there any redress to the oppressed and expiring people; for though the imperial oppressor often forces his ministerial oppressors to disgorge, and spoils the spoiler of his booty and his life, where he dares; yet, there being no restitution made, the condition of the oppressed is not mended: It is mock-justice, and worse than none; every act of power, every degree of office there, is robbery and violence, and every officer, the leastand lowest, is an irresistible tyrant.

Single and absolute monarchy therefore, or the ruling all by the will of one is nonsense and a contradiction; it is rather a multiplication of monarchs, and in fact the worst sort of oligarchy. Now, suppose we were to obey blindly the will of the prince; are we also to obey blindly the will of his eunuchs, mistresses and janizaries, who oppress without his knowledge, or against his will? Sure the instruments and delegates of tyranny are not also the Lord's anointed. How therefore shall we know their mind from his, which perhaps contradicts theirs? Or how shall we know whether he wills any thing at all, and whether they do not will for him? This is almost always the case; and then here is a monarchy of ministers, and parasites, pathicks, buffoons, women, and butchers, rule for him, and over him.

Is this government too by divine right? If it be, let us rail no longer at anarchy; which, being the absence of all government, though it leaves every man to do what he lists, yet likewise leaves every man a right to defend himself: Besides this sort of anarchy, where every one is absolutely free, will quickly settle into order, and indeed cannot subsist long. But single monarchy, which is a long gradation of tyrants, where many on one side do what they will against the most on the other side; where cruelty and lust revel without control; where wanton and inhuman power has no limits, and heavy and sorrowful oppression no remedy nor end; where the innocent and harmless suffer most, and the worst and vilest thrive best, and where none are secure; where wickedness supports power, and property is the spoil of armies: I say, this absolute monarchy is worse than absolute anarchy, by not being so general. It is a partial anarchy, with worse effects, and no remedy.

All this still further proves, that men and societies have no possible human security but certain and express laws, setting express bounds to the power of their magis-

trates, ascertaining the measure of power as well as subjection, and restraining alike the exorbitances of both prince and people. It is eternally true, that such as is the nature of the government, such will be the nature of the people; and that as they are happy or miserable, so they will be good or bad, as their government and governors are good or bad; and that their whole integrity and virtue, or all their corruption and baseness, does arise fromthat single source.
“Princes,” says Machiavel,

do, but with little reason, and an ill grace, complain of the transgressions and faults of their subjects, since by the negligence and debauched example of their prince alone, the people are, and must be, debauched: And, if the people of our times are infamous for thefts, and robberies, and plunderings, and preying upon one another, and the like enormities, it is all owing to the exorbitances and rapaciousness of their governors. Romania was a place full of all dissoluteness and iniquity, every day, and every trivial occasion, producing notorious murders and rapines: Which evils were not derived so much from any depravity in the nature of the people (as some would falsely suggest) a from the vile corruption of their princes: For, being poor themselves, and yet ambitious to live in splendor, luxury, and magnificence [the true causes of their poverty!] they were forced upon execrable courses for money, and indeed refused none that could supply them.

To pass by their many other sponging projects: One of their detestable schemes was to make laws against such and such things, and after these laws were published, they themselves would be the first to break them, and to encourage others to do the same: Nor was any man ever rebuked and punished for his unobservance, till they saw enough involved in the same penalty and praemunire; and then, forsooth, the laws were to be executed with all strictness and severity, not out of any zeal for justice, but from a ravenous appetite to be fingering the fines. From whence it followed, that, by grievous mulcts and explications, the people being impoverished, were constrained to use the same violences upon those, who were less potent than they themselves were. By which means the people were not corrected for doing evil, but instructed how to do it. And all these mischiefs proceeded solely from the baseness and iniquity of their princes.

Thus it is that such courts, being continually in a conspiracy against the property and felicity of their people, and preying continually upon them by vile means and pretences, teach their people to conspire against honesty, and to prey upon one another;

nay, by robbing them, they make it necessary for them to rob. Thus readily, necessarily, and naturally, is the spirit of the governors transfused into the governed, who are ever taught civil corruption by their superiors, before they practise it themselves.

Father le Compte, giving an account of the government of China, and shewing the wise provision made by the laws to check the great power of the Emperor, says,
Nor is interest a less motive than reputation to the Emperor, to be guided by the ancient customs, and to adhere to the laws, which are framed so much for his advantage that he cannot violate them, without obvious prejudice to his own authority, nor alter them, without bringing his kingdom into confusion; for such is the temper of the Chinese, that when the Emperor is governed by violence and passion, and grows negligent of his affairs, the same perverse spirit possesses his subjects: Every mandarin thinks himself sovereign of his province or city: The chief ministers sell offices and places to worthless wretches: The vice-roys become so many little tyrants: The governors observe no rule of justice; and the people thus oppressed, are easily stirred up to sedition: Rogues multiply, and commit villainies in companies, and court all occasions to do mischief, and to break the peace. Such beginnings have occasioned fatal consequences, and put China under the command of new masters; so that the Emperor's surest way to preserve his crown, is to observe the laws, and give an entire obedience to them.

An absolute prince and his deputy-tyrants are only the instruments of one another. By their hands he executes his lust, avarice, and rage; by his authority they execute their own. He is their dupe; they are his tools: However they may differ in particular views; they are always strongly united in cruelty and oppression. And therefore, whenever there is any contention amongst them, it is only who shall be the uppermost tyrants; for tyranny is the aim, the darling and the practice of all: And when the superior and subordinate tyrants butcher one another, as they often do; the people, though they see the revenge, yet feel no relief. Whoever bears the iron rod, they feel its sharpness and its weight: For almost every tyrant grows worse and worse; yet generally leaves a successor worse than himself. What unutterable and increasing woe must be the lot of their poor subjects under continual harrows of iron, made daily more poignant and heavy! Nor is the killing of a tyrant any cure, unless the tyranny be killed with him. The nature of this power breaths nothing but destruction, private ruin, and publick desolation; the common maxims of justice and mercy are not known to him, or known only for high treason; the very contrary are constantly practised; and his ministers, to be faithful servants, must be the worst of men, and all of them tyrants like himself.

These kings (of the East) says Monsieur Bernier, see no men about them, but men of nothing; slaves, ignorants, brutes, and such courtiers as are raised from the dust to dignities; who, for want of good education, do almost always retain somewhat of their original, and of the temper of beggars enriched. They are proud, insufferable, cowardly, insensible of honour, perfidious, void of affection, and of all regard for their king and country.

These kings, says he, must ruin all, to find means to defray those prodigious expences, which they cannot avoid, for the support of their great court, which has no other source of subsistence, but their coffers and treasures; and for maintaining constantly the vast number of forces necessary to keep the people in subjection, and to prevent their running away, and to force them to work, in order to draw from them the fruits of their work. For the people being kept continually under the dreadful yoke of oppression, and made to labour through fear, for the benefit of their governors only, and perfectly wild and desperate, and ready to do any act of despair. Captain Perry says the same of the Muscovites; that, made desperate by oppression and want, they run eagerly into tumults, murders, and rebellions: And Dr. Fletcher says, that they are so enraged withhunger and cold, that they beg in a wild and desperate tone, “Give me, andcut me; help me, and kill me,” &c.

I would observe here, how much more easy, as well as glorious, it is to govern freemen than slaves. It is true, that freemen go sometimes much farther in their opposition to unjust power, than slaves go or can go; because they have more spirit, sense, virtue, and force: But that they are with more difficulty governed, is absolutely false. It is indeed difficult to oppress them, and their rebellion is generally no more than their distinguishing of government from oppression; a distinction which their governors but too seldom make, and which slaves, born to oppression, know not how to make. In truth, government is a thing not so much as known in the greatest, by far the greatest part of the earth. Government supposes, on one side, a just execution of rational standing laws, made by the consent of society; and on the other side, a rational subjection to those laws. But what has arbitrary will, wanton and outrageous lust, cruelty and oppression, to do with government, but to destroy it?

But to shew yet further the anarchy of absolute monarchy, I shall insert here what Monsieur Bernier says of the education of such sort of princes. He says, that one of the principal sources of the misery, of the misgovernment, of the dispeopling, and the decay of the eastern empires, proceeds from hence, that the children of their kings are brought up only by women and eunuchs, who generally are no other than wretched

slaves from Russia, Circassia, Gurgistan, Mengrelia and Ethiopia; creatures of mean and insolent, servile and ignorant souls.

These princes become kings, without instruction worthy of men, and without knowing what it is to be a king. They are amazed when they come out of the seraglio, as persons coming out of another world, or out of some subterraneous cave, where they had spent their whole lives. They wonder at every thing which they meet, like so many ignorants. They either fear all and believe all, like children; or nothing at all, like idiots. They are commonly high and proud, and seemingly grave: But this their loftiness and gravity is so flat, so distasteful, and so unbecoming them, that it is visibly nothing but brutality and barbarousness, and the effect of some ill-studied documents. Sometimes they run into some childish civilities, still more unsavoury; or into such cruelties as are blind and brutal; or into the vile and mean vice of drunkenness, or into a gross and excessive luxury; and either ruin their bodies and understandings with their concubines or abandon themselves to the pleasure of hunting, like some carnivorous animals, and prefer a pack of dogs before so many poor people, whom they force to follow them in the pursuit of their game, and suffer to perish with hunger, heat, cold, and misery.

In a word, they always run into one extreme or another, and are entirely irrational or extravagant, according as they are carried away by their temper, or by the first impressions made upon them. And thus remaining, almost all, in utter ignorance of their duty, and of the state of their country, and of all publick concernments, they abandon the reins of the government to some vizier (in English, a first minister), who entertains them in their ignorance, and encourages them in their passions and follies; and their ignorance, passions and follies, are the strongest supports that these viziers can have to maintain their dominions over their masters.

These kings are also frequently given up entirely to these slaves, to their mothers, and to their own eunuchs, who often know nothing but to contrive plots of cruelty to strangle and banish one another; sometimes they murder the king himself: Nor is any one else safe in life or property. Thus far Bernier.

Thus do these princes live shut up in brothels, strangers and enemies to their people; and when an appetite for war is added to their spirit of cruelty and oppression, all the advantage from it to their subjects is, that in the warlike havock a quicker end to put to their miseries, by ending their lives with a gun or a scimitar, instead of famine.

As to the redress of their grievances, and the doing justice upon the authors of them,

it is absolutely impracticable in any country which has no states and representatives; and certain and irretrievable misery, as absolute as its government, is entailed upon it to all generations, till there be an utter end either of the government or of the people. The governor of Schiras pays for his government, to the King of Persia, vast sums of ready money, with fine horses, and all the fine things and rarities to be found within his province: Besides these excessive presents to the king, he is obliged to make the like to all the great lords and favourites at court, who are never to be gained but by continual bribes; so that to defray this great and endless expence, the wretched people must suffer great and endless burdens and exactions, and the governor must be a tyrant to preserve his government. Nor can they have any possible relief, though they have sometimes attempted to find it: But when two or three villages at a time have come to complain to the king, they have, after long waiting, been forced away without any redress, with empty purses and hungry bellies, because they who should have given them admission, were bribed to debar them: So that they must stupidly submit to the barbarous extortions of a ravenous vizier. This, says Bernier, is the policy practised by all the governors and kans in the Persian dominions: And he tells us, that one day, when Sha Sefi was hunting (a prince whose justice and punishments were only acts of cruelty), a poor man deputed by a neighbouring village to make some complaint to the king, appeared behind a rock with a paper in his hand: But while the poor wretch was declaring his errand, and praying for justice, his most gracious Majesty, without making any answer, drew his bow, and shootingtwo arrows into his body, instantly slew him.16

Nor was this execrable royal act of his any more agreeable to the genius of that prince than to the genius of that sort of government, which is naturally barbarous and savage An arbitrary prince is only the most exalted and successful beast of prey in his own dominions, and all the many officers under him are but so many subordinate beasts of prey, who hunt and rob and devour his people for him and themselves; and he and his officers do but constitute a long link of armed tigers terrible to behold, who leap furiously upon every man and every thing that tempts their eye or their appetite.

So that under a tyrant, there is no end of tyrants: From him that sways the scepter to him that carries a musket, all are tyrants, and every one for himself as far as he dare.

If any thing concerning these unintermitting pests of [the] human race, could possibly raise in a human soul any other passion but grief and horror, it would create mirth to hear mention made, as sometimes in books of history and travels there is mention made, of a tyrant's sitting in his seat of justice once in so many days, to hear equally all

causes and persons. What mockery! It is really a farce, but a melancholy one, to hear the word justice come out of the mouth of a tyrant; who, by being so, is a settled enemy to the common laws of justice and mercy, and common sense, and to all that is good or lovely, or desirable amongst men. As well may he set apart one day in six to cure all the diseases of his subjects, or to make their clothes, and cook their victuals, if he leave them any to make and cook. As every subject in his dominions is oppressed, and he and his instruments are the oppressors, I know no way upon earth for him to do them any general justice, but to destroy himself and all his deputy tyrants.
G I am, &c.

NO. 84. SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1722. Property the first Principle of Power. The Errors of our Princes who attended not to this. (Trenchard)↩

SIR,

The subjects which men understand least are generally what they talk of most, and none so much as of government; which almost every man thinks he has talents to direct, and, like Sancho Pancha, believes he can make a very good viceroy: He thinks nothing is necessary, but to get at the helm, where his business is, to command, and that of others, to obey; and then, as the aforesaid Sancho (viceroy-like) says, “Who but I?” But to govern a state well, is the most difficult science in the world; and few men, who have ever been in the possession of power, have known what to do with it, or ever understood the principles upon which all power is founded; and their mistakes have made endless havock amongst mankind.

Government is political, as a human body is natural, mechanism: both have proper springs, wheels, and a peculiar organization to qualify them for suitable motions, and can have no other than that organization enables them to perform; and when those springs or principles are destroyed by accident or violence, or are worn out by time, they must suffer a natural or political demise, and be buried, or else smell above ground; and though neither of them ought to be murdered, yet, when they are dead, they ought to be interred.

Now it is most certain, that the first principle of all power is property; and every man

will have his share of it in proportion as he enjoys property, and makes use of that property, where violence does not interpose. Men will ever govern or influence those whom they employ, feed, and clothe, and who cannot get the same necessary means of subsistence upon as advantageous terms elsewhere. This is natural power, and will govern and constitute the political, and certainly draw the latter after it, if force be absent; and force cannot subsist long without altering property; so that both must unite together, first or last, and property will either get the power, or power will seize the property in its own defence: for, it is foolish to think, that men of fortunes will be governed by those who have none, and be plundered to make such whom they despise, and have every day new reasons to hate, rich and insolent: And, on the other hand, men will contentedly submit to be governed by those who have large possessions, and from whom they receive protection and support, whilst they will yet always emulate their equals. Though the people of Rome extorted a law from the Senate, that commoners might be admitted into the chief offices of the state jointly with the nobles; yet all the address and power of the tribunes could not for a long time make then choose one of their own body into those offices, till commoners had got estates equal to the nobility; and thenthe balance of property turning to the people, they carried all before them.

The only true despotick governments now in the world, are those where the whole property is in the prince; as in the eastern monarchies, that of Morocco, &c. where every man enjoying what he has by the bounty of his sovereign, has no motive or means to contend with him, but looks upon him as his benefactor; and such as have no property, do not think themselves to be injured: But when men are in possession of any thing which they call their own, and think they have a right to enjoy it, they will ever contend for it, when they have the means to do so, and will always take advantage of every exigence in their prince's affairs to attain that right. Other princes, who have a mind to be as arbitrary as the former, and who want either the capacity or the power to acquire his natural dominion, seize by violence and productions of their subject' estates and industry; which is a constant state of force on one side, and oppression on the other: It perpetually provokes the people, and yet leaves them often the means of revenging the injustice done them, and must end in restoring the old government, or in setting up some new form by the extinction of the present usurpation; whereas in states truly despotick, though the monarchs be often destroyed, yet the monarchy is preserved entire, there being no interest inthe state capable of shaking it.

But both these sovereignties have one mischief in common, and inseparable from

them; viz. as they ever subsist by standing armies, so they must ever be subject to the caprices and disgusts of the military men, who often depose and murder their sovereigns; but in the latter much oftener than in the former: for whilst the people have the name, and, as they think, a right to property, they will always have some power, and will expect to be considered by their princes, and the soldiers will expect to have leave to oppress them, which will make continual struggles; and the prince, finding himself obliged to take part with one of them, often falls in the struggle; which was the case of the Roman emperors, most of whom were slaughtered either by the people, or their own soldiers: whereas in a natural absolute government, there is no danger but from the latter alone; and if he can please them, all is well, and he is safe.

But neither of these ought to be called by the name of government: both indeed are only violence and rapine, and the subjection of many millions of miserable wretches to the wild and wanton will of often the worst man among them: They deface human nature, and render the bountiful gifts of indulgent providence useless to the world; and the best which can be said of them is, that they make the grand tyrant and his inferior oppressors as miserable and unsafe as the poor wretches whom they oppress; nor should I have mentioned them as governments, but to make what I have further to say the better understood.

All other dominions are either limited monarchies, simple aristocracies, democracies, or mixtures of them; and the actions and operations in those governments, or the continuance of those governments, depend upon the distribution and alteration of the balance of property; and the not observing the variation and the frequent changes of the primum mobile, causes all the combustions that we see and feel in states. Men who fancy themselves in the same situation, as to outward appearances, stare about them and wonder what is become of the power which their predecessors enjoyed, without being able to judge how they lost it by the floating of property: They think they have a right to enjoy the same still; and so, in spite of nature, use fraud and violence to attain what they cannot hold, if it were attained: However, they will struggle for it; and this struggle produces contentions and civil wars, which most commonly end in the destruction of one of the parties, andsometimes of both.

Now it seems to me, that the great secret in politicks is, nicely to watch and observe this fluctuation and change of natural power, and to adjust the political to it by prudent precautions and timely remedies, and not put nature to the expence of throws and convulsions to do her own work: I do not mean by altering the form of government, which is rarely to be done without violence and danger; and therefore ought no

to be attempted when any thing else can be done, but by gentle and insensible methods. Suppose, for example, a limited monarchy, which cannot subsist without a nobility: If the nobles have not power enough to balance the great weight of the people, and support the crown and themselves, it is necessary to take some of the richest of the commoners into that order; if they have more power than is consistent with the dependence upon their monarch, it is right to create no more, but to let those already created expire and waste by degrees, till they become a proper balance: If the people by trade and industry grow so fast, that neither the crown nor nobles, nor both together, can keep pace with them; then there is no way left, but either, by using violence, to hazard, by an unequal contest, what the two latter are already in possession of, or, by using moderation and a beneficent conduct, to let the former enjoy all they can hope to get by a struggle, and voluntarily to give up all odious powers of doing mischief, though miscalled prerogative; which must ever be understood to be a power of doing good, when ordinary provisions fail and are insufficient.

Harry VII dreading the strengths of the nobles, who had always plagued, and sometimes destroyed his predecessors, found means to make them alienate a great part of their estates, which threw a proportionable power into the Commons; and his son, by seizing the revenues of the ecclesiasticks (who usually caballed with them), and dispersing those estates amongst the people, made that balance much heavier: which Queen Elizabeth wisely observing (though she loved power as well as any that went before her), yet caressed them with so much dexterity, that she preserved not only the crown upon her head, but wore it in its full lustre; and by encouraging trade, and letting nature take its course, still increased the people's wealth and power: which her successor early saw, and often lamented; but wanting her moderation, abilities, and experience, did not know how to temporize with an evil which he could not help, but took a preposterous way to cure it; and endeavoured, by the assistance of the governing clergy (who hoped by his means to recover what they lost by the Reformation) to regain a power, by pulpit-haranguing and distinctions, which he durst not contend for with the sword; and so his reign was a perpetual struggle between himself and his Parliaments: When they were quiet he bounced; and when he had thoroughly provoked them, he drew back, and gave good words again: but by such conduct he sowed the seeds of that fatal and bloody Civil War which sprang up in the reign of his son, and ended in the dissolution of the monarchy, and soon after of all liberty; for the general of the conquering army set himself (as all others will ever do in the same circumstance): But the property remaining where it was, this new tyranny was violent, and

against nature, and could not hold long, and all parties united against it; and so the na-
tion was restoredto its ancient form of government.

King Charles II came in with all the exterior advantages requisite to enslave a people: The nation was become weary of the sound of liberty, having suffered so much in their struggle for it, and lost all that they struggled for: The clergy were provoked by the loss of their dignities and revenues; the nobility and gentry were universally distasted and alienated by sequestrations, and by being so long deprived of the offices and distinctions which they claimed by their birth; and the body of the people had been harassed and exhausted by a long Civil War, and were weary of being tossed and tumbled once in a month out of one government into another; and all were prepared to accept and fall into any measures which might satiate their revenge upon those who had oppressed them, and to root out the very principles of liberty, the abuse of which had-brought such mischiefs upon them.

That prince got a Parliament to his mind (as all princes will do upon a revolution, when parties run high, and will do any thing to mortify their opponents) and kept it in constant pension; but property remaining in the people, it insensibly gained ground, and prevailed at last: The people grew universally disaffected, and looked upon the Parliament as a cabal of perjured hirelings, and no longer their representatives; and the nation was worked up into such a ferment, that their betrayers would not or durst not serve the court, nor the court keep them any longer. That prince had wit enough to drive things no farther than they would go, and knew when it was time to give back but his brother, with less understanding, and a much worse religion than his predecessor openly professed; hoped to accomplish what he had attempted, or despaired of bringing about; and how he succeeded we all know. I gladly throw a veil over what has happened since; and hope I shall hereafter have no reason to repent it.

I shall only observe, before I conclude this letter, that there is no need of the caballing of different interests, the uniting in joint councils, and concerting regular measures, to bring about some of the greatest events in human affairs; and consequently in great publick exigencies, oppressors will find no security in the appearing opposition of parties, who, like a pair of shears, will cut only what is between them, when they seem most to threaten one another. When nature has prepared the way, all things will tend to their proper center; and though men for some time will dally and play with their lesser interests, yet at last they will mechanically fall into their great ones, and often without intending or knowing it: Men will always feel their strength, when they cannot reason upon it, or are afraid to do so. I could name a party that for above thirty years

together have acted in the interests of liberty, and for the greatest part of the time could not bear the sound of liberty, till at last great numbers of them are caught by the principles which they most detested; which I intend as a seasonable caution to all those who have the honour to sit at the helm of states, or to advise princes, who may at any time hereafter want such a memento.

I shall, in my next letter, endeavour to shew, upon the principles here laid down, that England at present is not capable of any other form of government than what it enjoys, and has a right to enjoy; and that another neighbouring state will, with very great difficulty, preserve the constitution which they now are in possession of.
T I am, &c.

NO. 85. SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1722. Britain incapable of any Government but a limited Monarchy; with the Defects of a neighbouring Republick. (Trenchard)

SIR,

Tacitus observed of the Romans in his time Nec totam libertatem nec totam servitutem pati posse; That they could neither bear full liberty, nor perfect slavery. This is certainly the case of England at present, if by liberty be understood what I presume he meant by it, a republican form of government. But I conceive that liberty may be better preserved by a well poised monarchy, than by any popular government that I know now in the world, whatever forms may exist in imagination. However, whether this be true or

not, it is certainly true that no man in his wits will lose the benefit of a very good present establishment, and run infinite hazards, to try to get one a little better, if he could have any prospect of attaining it: And I shall endeavour to shew, that the effecting such a project is impossible; and that during the present distribution of property, we can preserve liberty by no other establishment than what we have; and in the attempt to alter it, must run great hazard of losing what we are in possession of, or perhaps of falling into an absolute monarchy; or at best must return to the same form again, as we have done once already by such feats of gallantry.

It proceeds from a consummate ignorance in politicks, to think that a number of men agreeing together can make and hold a commonwealth, before nature has prepared the way; for she alone must do it. An equality of estate will give an equality of power; and an equality of power is a commonwealth, or democracy: An agrarian law, or something equivalent to it, must make or find a suitable disposition of property; and when that comes to be the case, there is no hindering a popular form of government, unless sudden violence takes away all liberty, and, to preserve itself, alters the distribution of property again. I hope that no one amongst us has a head so wrong turned, as to imagine that any man, or number of men, in the present situation of affairs, can ever get power enough to turn all the possessions of England topsy-turvy, and throw them into average, especially any who can have a will and interest in doing it; and without al this it is impossible to settle a commonwealth here; and I dare say, that few desire it, but such as having no estates of their own, or means and merit to acquire them, would be glad to share in those of other people.

Now it is certain, that the distribution of property in England is adapted to our present establishment. The nobility and gentry have great possessions; and the former have great privileges and distinctions by the constitution, and the latter have them in fact, though positive laws give but few of them: For their birth and fortunes procure them easy admittance into the legislature; and their near approach to the throne gives them pretences to honourable and profitable employments, which create a dependence from the inferior part of mankind; and the nature of many of their estates, and particularly of their manors, adds to that dependence. Now all these must ever be in the interest of monarchy whilst they are in their own interest; since monarchy supports and keeps up this distinction, and subsists by it: For it is senseless to imagine, that men who have great possessions, will ever put themselves upon the level with those who have none, or with such as depend upon them for subsistence or protection, whom they will always think they have a right to govern or influence, and will be ever able to govern, whilst they keep their possessions, and a monarchical form of government, and therefore will always endeavour to keepit.

All the bishops, dignitaries, or governing clergy, all who have good preferments in the church, or hope to get them, are in the interest of monarchy, for the reasons which I gave in a former letter, and for some others which I choose not to give now. They know very well too, that a popular government would take away all possessions which it should think fit to call superfluous, would level all the rest, and be apt to reason, tha Christianity would fare never the worse, if its professors were less politicians, of whicl

they see before their eyes a pregnant and very affecting instance in Holland. All great and exclusive companies are in the interest of monarchy (whatever weak people have alleged to the contrary); for they can much easier preserve their separate and unwarrantable privileges by applications to the vices and passions of a court, than by convincing a popular assembly; and for the same reason, all officers who have great salaries and exorbitant fees must ever be sure friends to monarchy. Rich merchants, and indeed all rich men, will be equally in the same interest, and be willing to enjoy themselves, and leave to their posterity all the advantages and distinctions which always attend large fortunes in monarchies.

After these (many of whom are men of virtue and probity, and desire only to enjoy the rights which they are born to, or have acquired) there follows a long train of debauchees, and riotous livers, lewd women, gamesters, and sharpers; with such who ge by oppression and unequal laws, or the non-execution of good ones: All these are ever for monarchy and the right line, as expecting much fairer quarter from the corruption of courtiers, than they can ever hope to meet with in popular states, who always destroy and exterminate such vermin, of which sort (I thank God) we have none amongst us at present; but who knowshow soon we may?

Now, without entering into the question, which is the best government in theory, a limited monarchy, or a democratical form of government? I think I may safely affirm, that it is impossible to contend against all these interests, and the crown too, which is almost a match for them all together; so that the phantom of a commonwealth must vanish, and never appear again but in disordered brains. If this be the true circumstance of England at present, as I conceive it indisputably is, we have nothing left to do, or indeed which we can do, but to make the best of our own constitution, which, if duly administered, provides excellently well for general liberty; and to secure the possession of property, and to use our best endeavours to make it answer the other purposes of private virtue, as far as the nature of it is capable of producing that end.

I have purposely declined the speaking of aristocracies, because there can be no imaginary danger of establishing such a government here: for the nobility have neither property nor credit enough to succeed in such an act of knight-errantry, or will to attempt it; and the gentry will ever oppose them, unless their interests be also taken into the project; and both together are not able to contend with the crown and the body of the people, the latter of which will ever be in the interests of equality.

And now having mentioned aristocracies, I shall make some observations upon a

neighbouring state, which is vulgarly mistaken for a commonwealth, and is so in nature, according to the balance of property there; but is politically an union of several little aristocracies, in many respects like some states of Italy in the first time of the Romans, but contrived with much worse policy. As it was jumbled together in confusion, so it seems to me to subsist by chance, or rather by the constant dread of the two great successive powers of Europe, viz. that of Spain formerly, and France since; for the natural power being in the people, and the political in the magistrates, it has al the causes of dissolution in its contexture. Every town is governed and subject to a little aristocracy within itself, who have no foundation of suitable property to entitle them to their dominion; and each of those is independent of its provincial state, and indeed of the States-General, nor have any check upon their own actions, but the tumult and insurrections of the people, who have the real and natural power: and indeed, to do the magistrates right, they judge so well of their own weakness and the power of the people, that they seldom or never give them just cause of provocation; but by frugality, public economy, wise and timely compliances, impartial justice, and not raising great estates to themselves at the other's expence, they make their subjects easy, and find their own account in the submission of those whom they want power to govern by the force of authority; and probably will continue to make them so, whilst they keep to the same maxims and their present conduct. But this is no steady and durable dominion; nor, unless mankind are formed there with other appetites and passions than in all other parts of the world, can the same prudence be always observed; which seems to me to be owing only to their necessities, and that virtue, moderation, and frugality, which is conspicuous in the first rise of states, and is not yet quite spent there, but cannot last much longer: for when they cease to be kept together by the constant dread of overgrown neighbours, they will certainly think themselves at liberty to play their own games at home. Those who are in possession of power will know what it is good for; and those who have great riches will fall into luxury, then into extravagance, at last into necessity; and others will vie with them, and follow their example.

When their magistrates have impaired their estates, or fancy that they want greater, they will plunder the publick; and others of equal condition will emulate them, and begin to ask what right the others have to the sole enjoyment of privileges and employments, which they think themselves to all respects equally entitled to, and will not be content to be always subjects to those who are no better than they are; and the people will be impatient in continuing to pay large taxes to such who pocket them, and will endeavour to right themselves, and have power enough to do so. These opposite in-

terests must raise convulsions in the body politick, and produce all the mischiefs which have happened in other states upon the like occasions. Those who have power, will endeavour to keep it; those who suffer under it, will endeavour to take it away; and the event will be in the will of heaven alone, but in all likelihood will besome other form of government.

I take my account of the constitution of this state from others, who possibly may not be well informed of it, and I hope are not so: for I should be very sorry to see the most virtuous and flourishing state which ever yet appeared in the world, perish of an internal distemper; a state which, ever since its institution, has been the champion of publick liberty, and has defended itself, and in a great measure its neighbours, from the two greatest tyrannies which ever threatened Europe and the Christian religion.
T I am, &c.

NO. 94. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1722. Against Standing Armies. (Trenchard AND GORDON)

SIR,

When, in King William's reign, the question was in debate, Whether England should be ruled by standing armies? the argument commonly used by some, who had the presumption to call themselves Whigs, and owned in the Ballancing Letter (supposed to be written by one who gave the word to all the rest), was, that all governments must have their periods one time or other, and when that time came, all endeavours to preserve liberty were fruitless; and shrewd hints were given in that letter, that England was reduced to such a condition; that our corruptions were so great, and the dissatisfaction of the people was so general, that the publick safety could not be preserved, but by increasing the power of the crown: And this argument was used by those shameless men, who had caused all that corruption, and all that dissatisfaction.

But that gentleman and his followers were soon taught to speak other language: They were removed from the capacity of perplexing publick affairs any more: The nation shewed a spirit that would not submit to slavery; and their unhappy and betrayed master, from being the most popular prince who ever sat upon the English throne, became, through the treachery of his servants, suspected by many of his best subjects,

and was rendered unable by their jealousies, to defend himself and them; and so considerable a faction was formed against his administration, that no good man can recollect, without concern and horror, on the difficulties which that great and good King was reduced to grapple with during the remainder of his troublesome reign.

I have lately met with some creatures and tools of power, who speak the same language now: They tell us that matters are come to that pass, that we must either receive the Pretender, or keep him out with bribes and standing armies; that the nation is so corrupt, that there is no governing it by any other means; and, in short, that we must submit to this great evil, to prevent a greater: As if any mischief could be more terrible than the highest and most terrible of all mischiefs, universal corruption, and a military government. It is indeed impossible for the subtlety of traitors, the malice of devils, or for the cunning and cruelty of our most implacable enemies, to suggest stronger motives for the undermining and overthrow of our excellent establishment, which is built upon the destruction of tyranny, and can stand upon no other bottom. It is madness in extremity, to hope that a government founded upon liberty, and the free choice of the assertors of it, can be supported by other principles; and whoever would maintain it by contrary ones, intends to blow it up, let him allege what he will. This gives me every day new reasons to believe what I have long suspected; for if ever a question should arise, whether a nation shall submit to certain rules, or struggle for a remedy? these gentlemen well know which side they will choose, and certainly intend that which they must choose.

I am willing to think, that these impotent babblers speak not the sense of their superiors, but would make servile court to them from topics which they abhor. Their superiors must know, that it is raving and frenzy to affirm, that a free people can be long governed by impotent terrors; that millions will consent to be ruined by the corruptions of a few; or that those few will join in their ruin any longer than the corruption lasts: That every day new and greater demands will rise upon the corrupters; that no revenue, how great soever, will feed the voraciousness of the corrupted; and that every disappointment will make them turn upon the oppressors of their country, and fall into its true interest and their own: That there is no way in nature to preserve a revolution in government, but by making the people easy under it, and shewing them their interest in it, and that corruption, bribery, and terrors, will make no lasting friends, but infinite and implacable enemies; and that the best security of a prince amongst a free people, is the affections of his people; which he can always gain, by making their interest his own, and by shewing that all his views tend to their good. They will then,

as they love themselves, love him, and defend him who defends them. Upon this faithful basis his safety will be better established than upon the ambitious and variable leaders of a few legions, who may be corrupted, disobliged, or surprised, and often have been so; and hence great revolutions have been brought about, and great nations undone, only by the revolt of single regiments.

Shew a nation their interest, and they will certainly fall into it: A whole people can have no ambition but to be governed justly; and when they are so, the intrigues and dissatisfactions of particulars will fall upon their own heads. What has any of our former courts ever got by corruption, but to disaffect the people, and weaken themselves? Let us now think of other methods, if it be only for the sake of the experiment. The ways of corruption have been tried long enough in past administrations: Let us try in this what publick honesty will do; and not condemn it before we have fully proved it, and found it ineffectual; and it will be time enough to try other methods when this fails.

That we must either receive the Pretender, or keep up great armies to keep him out, is frightful and unnatural language to English ears. It is an odd way of dealing with us, that of offering us, or forcing upon us, an alternative, where the side which they would recommend is full as formidable as the side from which they would terrify us. If we [are] to be governed by armies, it is all one to us, whether they be Protestant or popish armies; the distinction is ridiculous, like that between a good and a bad tyranny. We see, in effect, that it is the power and arms of a country that form and direct the religion of a country; and I have before shewn, that true religion cannot subsist where true liberty does not. It was chiefly, if not wholly, King James's usurped power, and his many forces, and not his being a papist, that rendered him dreadful to his people. Military governments are all alike; nor does the liberty and property of the subject fare a bit the better or the worse for the faith and opinion of the soldiery. Nor does an arbitrary Protestant prince use his people better than an arbitrary popish prince; and we have seen both sorts of themchanging the religion of their country according to their lust.

They are therefore stupid politicians, who would derive advantages from a distinction which is manifestly without a difference: It is like, however, that they may improve in their subtleties, and come, in time, to distinguish between corrupt corruption and uncorrupt corruption, between a good ill administration and an ill good administration, between oppressive oppression and unoppressive oppression, and between French dragooning, and English dragooning; for there is scarce any other new pitch of non-

sense and contradiction left to such men in their reasonings upon publick affairs, and in the part which they act in them.

Of a piece with the rest is the stupid cunning of some sort of statesmen, and practised by most foreign courts, to blame the poor people for the misery which they bring upon them. They say, that they are extremely corrupt; and so keep them starving and enslaved by way of protection. They corrupt them by all manner of ways and inventions, and then reproach them for being corrupt. A whole nation cannot be bribed; and if its representatives are, it is not the fault, but the misfortune, of the nation: And if the corrupt save themselves by corrupting others, the people, who suffer by the corruptions of both, are to be pitied, and not abused. Nothing can be more shameless and provoking, than to bring a nation, by execrable frauds and extortions, against its daily protestations and remonstrances, into a miserable pass, and then father all those villainies upon the people, who would have gladly hanged the authors of them. At Rome the whole people could be entertained, feasted, and bribed; but it is not so elsewhere, where the people are too numerous, and too far spread, to be debauched, cajoled, and purchased; and if any of their leadersare, it is without the people's consent.

There is scarce such a thing under the sun as a corrupt people, where the government is uncorrupt: it is that, and that alone, which makes them so; and to calumniate them for what they do not seek, but suffer by, is as great impudence as it would be to knock a man down and then rail at him for hurting himself. In what instances do the people of any country in the world throw away their money by millions, unless by trusting it to those who do so? Where do the people send great fleets, at a great charge, to be frozen up in one climate, or to be eaten out by worms in another, unless for their trade and advantage? Where do the people enter into mad wars against their interest, or, after victorious ones, make peace without stipulating for one new advantage to themselves; but, on the contrary, pay the enemy for having beaten them? Where do the people plant colonies, or purchase provinces, at a vast expence, without reaping, or expecting to reap, one farthing from them; and yet still defend them at a farther expence? Where do the people make distracted bargains, to get imaginary millions; and, after having lost by such bargains almost all the real millions which they had, yet give more millions to get rid of them? What wise or dutiful people consent to be without the influence of the presence of their prince, and of his virtues; or of those of his family, who are to come after him? No, these things are never done by any people; but whereever they are done, they are done without their consent; and yet all these things have been done in former ages, and in neighbouring kingdoms.

For such guilty and corrupt men, therefore, to charge the people with corruption, whom either they have corrupted, or cannot corrupt, and, having brought great misery upon them, to threaten them with more; is in effect, to tell them plainly, "Gentlemen, we have used you very ill, for which you, who are innocent of it, are to blame; we therefore find it necessary, for your good, to use you no better, or rather worse: And, if you will not accept of this our kindness, which, however, we will force upon you, if we can, we will give you up into the terrible hands of raw-head and bloody-bones; who, being your enemy, may do you as much mischief as we, who are your friends, have done you." I appeal to common sense, whether this be not the sum of such threats and reasonings in their nativecolours.

The partizans of Oliver Cromwell, when he was meditating tyranny over the three nations, gave out, that it was the only expedient to balance factions, and to keep out Charles Stuart; and so they did worse things to keep him out, than he could have done if they had let him in. And, after the king's restoration, when there was an attempt made to make him absolute, by enabling him to raise money without Parliament (an attempt which every courtier, except Lord Clarendon, came into), it was alleged to be the only expedient to keep the nation from falling back into a commonwealth: as if any commonwealth upon earth were not better than any absolute monarchy. His courtiers foresaw, that by their mad and extravagant measures they should make the nation mad, and were willing to save themselves by the final destruction of the nation: They therefore employed their creatures to whisper abroad stupid and villainous reasons, why people should be content to be finally undone, lest something not near so bad should befall them.

Those who have, by abusing a nation, forfeited its affections, will never be for trusting a people, who, they know, justly detest them; but, having procured their aversion and enmity, will be for fortifying themselves against it by all proper ways: and the ways of corruption, depredation, and force, being the only proper ones, they will not fail to be practised; and those who practise them, when they can no longer deny them, will be finding reasons to justify them; and, because they dare not avow the true reasons, they must find such false ones as are most likely to amuse and terrify. And hence so much nonsense and improbability uttered in that reign, and sometimes since, to vindicate guilty men, and vilify an innocent people, who were so extravagantly fond of that prince, that their liberties were almost gone, before they would believethem in danger

It is as certain, that King James II wanted no army to help him to preserve the constitution, nor to reconcile the people to their own interest: But, as he intended to invade

and destroy both, nothing but corruption and a standing army could enable him to do it; and (thank God) even his army failed him, when he brought in Irish troops to help them. This therefore was his true design, but his pretences were very different: He pleaded the necessity of his affairs, nay, of publick affairs; and of keeping up a good standing force to preserve his kingdoms, forsooth, from insults at home and from abroad. This was the bait; but his people, who had no longer any faith in him, and to whom the hook appeared threatening and bare, would not believe him, nor swallow it; and if they were jealous of him, restless under him, and ready to rise against him, he gave them sufficient cause. He was under no hardship nor necessity, but what he created to himself; nor did his people withdraw their affections from him, till he had withdrawn his right to those affections. Those who have used you ill will never forgive you; and it is no new thing wantonly to make an enemy, and then calumniate and destroy him for being so.

When people, through continual ill usage, grow weary with their present ill condition, they will be so far from being frightened with a change, that they will wish for one; and, instead of terrifying them, by threatening them with one, you do but please them even in instances where they have no reason to be pleased. Make them happy, and they will dread any change; but while they are ill used, they will not fear the worst. The authors of publick misery and plunder may seek their own safety in general desolation but to the people nothing can be worse than ruin, from what hand soever it comes: A Protestant musket kills as sure as a popish one; and an oppressor is an oppressor, to whatever church he belongs: The sword and the gun are of every church, and so are the instruments of oppression. The late directors were all staunch Protestants;and Cromwell had a violent aversion to popery.

We are, doubtless, under great necessities in our present circumstances; but to increase them, in order to cure them, would be a preposterous remedy, worthy only of them who brought them upon us; and who, if they had common shame in them, would conceal, as far as they could, under silence, the heavy evils, which, though they lie upon every man's shoulders, yet lie only at the doors of a few. The plea of necessity, if it can be taken, will justify any mischief, and the worst mischiefs. Private necessity makes men thieves and robbers; but publick necessity requires that robbers of all sizes should be hanged. Publick necessity therefore, and the necessity of such pedant politicians, are different and opposite things. There is no doubt, but men guilty of great crimes would be glad of an enormous power to protect them in the greatest; and then tell us that there is a necessity for it. Those against whom justice is armed will

ever talk thus, and ever think it necessary to disarm her. But whatever sincere services they may mean to themselves by it, they can mean none to his Majesty, who would be undone with his subjects by such treacherous and ruinous services: And therefore it is fit that mankind should know, and they themselves should know, that his Majesty can and will be defended against them and their Pretender, without standing armies; which would make him formidable only to his people, and contemptible to his foes, who take justly the measure of his power from his credit with his subjects.

But I shall consider what present occasion there is of keeping up more troops than the usual guards and garrisons; and shall a little further animadvert upon the arts and frivolous pretences made use of, in former reigns, to reduce this government to the condition and model of the pretended jure divino monarchies, where millions must be miserable and undone, to make one and a few of his creatures lawless, rampant, and unsafe.
T and G I am, &c.

John Trenchard, *Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects.* Four volumes in Two, edited and annotated by Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995). Vol. 3. 1/2/2017.
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1239>

LICENSE

Political Science 601: Political Theory of the American Revolution Copyright © 2017 by John Zumbrunnen. All Rights Reserved.

SHARE THIS BOOK

Powered by Pressbooks

Pressbooks User Guide | Pressbooks Directory | Contact